Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir Tahriri

A Treatise on Servitude

A Commentary on Imam Sajjad's (a) Risalat al-Huquq

Translated by Salman Bhojani

Edited by Muhammad Mahdi Kassamali

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

The method of transliteration of Islamic terminology from the Arabic language has been carried out according to the standard transliteration table mentioned below:

ء	ʾ	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	ʿ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ک	k
د	d	ل	l

ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	و	w
س	s	ي	y
ش	sh	ه	h
ص	ṣ		

Long Vowels		Short Vowels	
ا	ā	ـَ	a
و	ū	ـُ	u
ي	ī	ـِ	i

AYATULLAH TAHRIRI'S OPENING REMARKS

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

والحمد لله رب العالمین وصلی الله علی محمد وآله الطاهرین

قال الله تعالی: وما امروا الا لیعبدوا الله مخلصین له الدین حنفاء

انسان اگر در وجود خویش دقت کند می فهمد که جزیک وظیفه در عالم برایش نیست و آن اظهار خضوع آگاهانه در برابر آفریدگار یکتاست، که خویشتن و عالم را با شگفتی وصف ناپذیر و اعجاب انگیز وارتباط کامل با یکدیگر، مرتبط به خودش آفریده است، بگونه ای که لحظه ای نمی توان این ارتباط را قطع کرد. با این که ممکن است ارتباط وجودش با بعضی از موجودات اطرافش، جایگزین داشته باشد.

این آفرینش حکیمانه برای رسیدن به خودش می باشد که آن جز در تحت فرمان او بودن در تمامی شئون زندگی، با راهی که او معین می کند، بدست نمی آید. امام سجاد علیه السلام با بیان حق بزرگ پروردگار بر انسان، با اظهار بندگی خالص در برابر او در تمام شئون زندگی، این مسیر را ترسیم فرموده است.

خداوند متعال به این جانب توفیق عنایت فرمود، شرحی به این رساله حقوق حضرت علیه السلام بنویسم، و نیز به دوستان از انگلستان توفیق عنایت کرد تا این شرح را به انگلیسی ترجمه کنند، ضمن تشکر فراوان از ایشان، امید است نویسنده و ترجمه کنندگان از بندگان خالص خداوند قرار گرفته، و این نوشتار را هدیت راه سالکان طریق بندگی حق تعالی قرار بگیرد.

محمد باقر تحریری

TRANSLATION OF AYATULLAH TAHRIRI'S OPENING REMARKS

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds. May He send His blessings on Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and his immaculate Progeny (peace be upon them).

Allah says in the Holy Qur'ān,

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

> ... and they were not commanded except to worship Allah, dedicating their faith to Him as people of pure faith. (98:5)

If a person scrutinises their existence, they will understand that they do not have in this world except one duty. That duty is to consciously express humility before the One Creator by realising that He has created the human being and the world in an inexpressibly astounding fashion and with perfect synchrony, all of it entirely connected to Him. This connection is such that it cannot discontinue for even a single moment, even though the connection between humans and other beings around them can be replaced.

The human being is wisely created with the purpose of reaching Him, which cannot happen except by submitting to His command in all aspects of our lives and through the path that He has outlined. By expounding on the immense right of Allah over the human, Imam

Sajjād (peace be upon him) has drawn out this path, which is to express sincere servitude to Allah in all aspects of life.

Allah has blessed this humble servant to write a commentary on the treatise of rights by Imam (peace be upon him) and blessed Bab al-Ridha international institute to get this commentary translated into English by Shaykh Salman Bhojani from India and Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Kassamali from Canada.

We hope that God willing, the author and translators are counted amongst the sincere servants of Allah, that Allah and the Imam of our time (peace be upon him) are pleased with this writing and that it opens up the pathway for the seekers to the path of servitude to Allah.

Ameen, O Lord of the Worlds.

Muḥammad Bāqir Taḥrīrī

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ayatullah Muḥammad Bāqir Taḥrīrī was born in Tehran in the year 1955 to a family of religious scholars. His mother was a respectable lady from a middle class, religious family with a strong love for the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). His father was the late Ayatullah Maḥmūd Taḥrīrī, who was a well-known scholar and mystic.

Ayatullah Mahmud Tahriri (His Father)

From a young age his father busied himself acquiring knowledge of the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) along with practicing and preaching this knowledge. While still young, he associated with spiritual personalities such as Shaykh Rajab ʿAlī Khayyāṭ and later began his studies in the Islamic seminaries of Tehran. There he became acquainted with great scholars such as Ayatullah Shāh Ābādī and Sayyid Riḍā Darbandī. Afterwards, he enrolled in the Islamic seminary of Qom and studied under great scholars such as Ayatullah Shahābuddīn Marʿashī Najafī, Ayatullah Muḥammad Riḍā Gulpaygāni, Imam Rūhullāh Khumaynī, and Ayatullah Ḥusayn Burūjardī.

In addition to this, Ayatullah Maḥmūd was in touch with and benefitted spiritually from Ayatullah Bahjat as well as some of the students of the well-known mystic Mīrzā Jawād Malikī Tabrīzi such as Sayyid Ḥusayn Qummi and Shaykh ʿAbbās Tehrāni. However, his primary teacher in matters of mysticism and spirituality was ʿAllāmah

Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tabātabā'ī. At the same time, he established a spiritual bond with the great mystic, Shaykh Jawād Anṣāri Hamadānī.

From the age of 30, Ayatullah Maḥmūd led congregational prayers and held many sermons, preaching and enlightening the youth. He passed away in the mosque before leading the prayers in the year 1990.

Early Life in Tehran

Ayatullah Muḥammad Bāqir Taḥrīrī entered elementary school at the age of six and spent two years in high school while also attending religious gatherings and benefiting from his father's spiritual presence. It was his father who inspired him to acquire religious knowledge. He entered the Islamic seminary of Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far in Tehran in the year 1969, which at the time was under the management of Ayatullah Mujtahidī. Here he studied the majority of the book Sharḥ al-Lum'ah along with other introductory studies under Ayatullah Mujtahidī and other teachers.

In addition to benefitting from the spiritual presence of Ayatullah Mujtahidī, he also benefitted spiritually from Shaykh Jawād Karbalā'ī and the gatherings of Sayyid Hāshim Tehrānī.

Arrival in Qom

Because of the lack of scholars in Tehran and also in order to benefit spiritually, Ayatullah Taḥrīrī sought permission from his mentor Ayatullah Mujtahidī to move to the city of Qom. In 1973 he did so, first living in the Ḥujjatiyyah school and then later Ayatullah Mar'ashī Najafī's school. When he first entered Qom, on his father's advice, he went to the holy shrine of Sayyidah Ma'ṣūmah (peace be upon her) and requested from her both a home and a mentor to guide and teach him. God Almighty fulfilled both of these requests for him.

In the year 1977 Ayatullah married a respectable and devoted lady from a religious family, who has stood by him through all stages of life and supported him throughout his endeavors. Together they

have two daughters and two sons.

Teachers

Some of Ayatullah Taḥrīrī's teachers in the holy city of Qom and books that he has studied with them include:

- Shaykh Bākū'ī: A large part of the book Maʿālim
- Ayatullah Dūzdūzāni: Qawānīn al-Usūl
- Ayatullah Ustādi: Parts from the Sharḥ al-Lumʿah
- Ayatullah ʿAlawī Gorgāni: Parts from the Sharḥ al-Lumʿah
- Ayatullah Sayyid Abū al-Faḍl Mūsawī Tabrīzī: Parts from the Sharh al-Lumʿah
- Ayatullah Salawātī: Makāsib al-Muharramaḥ
- Ayatullah Sitūde: Kitāb al-Bayʿ, Makāsib and Matājir
- Ayatullah Sayyid Rasūl Mūsawī: A large part of Rasā'il
- Ayatullah Dhihnī: Parts of Rasā'il
- Ayatullah Fāḍil Lankarānī: Kifāyah al-Usūl, Volume One
- Ayatullah Ḥusayn Maẓāhirī Iṣfahānī: Kifāyah al-Usūl, Volume Two
- Ayatullah Ibrāhīm Amīnī: A part of Bidāyah al-Ḥikmah and Ishārāt
- Ayatullah Muḥammad Gīlānī: Manẓumah of Mulla Hādi Sabzwārī
- Ayatullah Girāmī: Mantiq Manẓūmah
- Ayatullah Misbāḥ Yazdī: Nihāyah al-Ḥikmah and some subject-wise tafsīr
- Ayatullah Jawādi Āmulī: Parts from five volumes of al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah
- Ayatullah Ḥasanzāde Āmulī: Parts from two volumes of al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah. Parts of the Ilāhiyāt and Ṭabīʿīyyāt of the Shifā as well as parts of the Tamhīd al-Qawāʿid, Fūṣūs al-Ḥikam and Miṣbāḥ al-Uns (textbooks in ʿIrfān)
- Ayatullah Sayyid Muḥammad Rūḥānī: Approximately two years dars al-khārij in Usūl
- Ayatullah Tabrīzī: 10 years dars al-khārij in Fiqh and 7 years

dars al-khārij in Usūl
- Ayatullah al-Uẓamā Bahjat: Approximately 17 years of dars al-khārij in Fiqh

Teachers in Akhlaq (Ethics) and Spirituality

Ayatullah Taḥrīrī attended Ayatullah Bahjat's congregational prayers and *rozeh* (mourning gatherings) from the beginning of his time in Qom. In addition to this, he maintained a spiritual bond with Ayatullah Bahjat until the end of his life.

In the early days of his coming to Qom, Ayatullah Taḥrīrī also developed a bond with Ayatullah Sa'ādat Parvar. He used to attend private sessions with Ayatullah Sa'ādat Parvar, and it was through him that Ayatullah Tahrīrī became acquainted with the great *mufassir* (exegete) of the Qur'ān, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī. Ayatullah Taḥrīrī joined the Thursday and Friday question-answer sessions with 'Allāmah which lasted almost until the end of 'Allāmah's life. More importantly he was mentored spiritually by these two great teachers, 'Allamah Tabātabā'ī and Ayatullah Sa'ādat Parvar, until the end of their lives.

In addition to all of the above, he also benefitted spiritually from his esteemed father.

Academic and Educational Activities

From the early days of his time in the Islamic seminaries, Ayatullah Taḥrīrī began to teach. Aside from the courses he taught in the introductory levels, some of the other courses he has taught include:
- Chapters from Sharḥ al-Lum'ah and Makāsib al-Muḥarramah (books in Fiqh)
- Chapters from Rasā'il and Kifāyah al-Usūl (books in Usūl al-Fiqh)
- A full dars al-khārij course on Usūl al-Fiqh
- Courses in philosophy such as the Manẓūmah, Bidāyah al-Ḥikmah, Ḥikmah al-Ishārāt, and two courses on Asfār al-Arba'ah
- About 15 years of Tafsīr al-Mizān, repeatedly teaching it from the beginning until Sūrah Mā'idah

- Islamic theology and ethics at the University of Tehran for four years

Tabligh Activities

Towards the end of the second stage of his seminary studies, Ayatullah Taḥrīrī began to go for *tablīgh*. This was in the year 1977. From then onwards he would regularly engage in *tablīgh* activities.

After the death of his father in 1990, Ayatullah Taḥrīrī continued his father's Friday morning gatherings in Tehran. This continues till today. His father Ayatullah Maḥmūd Taḥrīrī was giving a commentary on the famous narration of the *'aql* and *jahl* (the intellect and ignorance) when he passed away. Ayatullah Taḥrīrī first continued this, then moved on to discuss commentaries on Ziyārah al-Jāmi'ah al-Kabīrah, the letter of Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) to Mālik al-Ashtar, the Noble Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) instructions to Abū Dharr, and now he is currently discussing the *du'ā* of Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him) on the day of 'Arafah.

He is also conducting another session on Fridays in Tehran that has been running for more than 15 years. In this gathering, topics such as the Munājāt al-Sha'bāniyyah, Du'ā Kumayl, letter 31 of Nahj al-Balāghah (Imam 'Ali's instructions to Imam al-Ḥasan, peace be upon them), Munājāt Khamsah 'Ashar, and the sermon of Sayyidah Zahrā' (peace be upon her) have been discussed.

In addition, he holds *akhlāq* (ethical) classes in Qom during the week in which ethical and spiritual topics are covered. For example, commentaries on the *ḥadīth* of 'Unwān al-Baṣri and Du'ā al-Iftitāḥ are discussed during these classes. One example of these is a regular class that has been running in Imam Khomeni University in Qom since the year 1988. In this class various books, letters and supplications have been discussed. Initially the book Mi'rāj-i Sa'ādah of Mullā Mahdī Narāqī was discussed, then letter 31 of Nahj al-Balāghah, the Noble Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family)

instructions to Abū Dharr, Imam Sajjād's (peace be upon him) Risālat al-Ḥuqūq and lastly Du'ā Makārim al-Akhlāq.

He is also currently teaching the book 40 Ḥadīth by Imam Khomeini at the Supreme Assembly of Islamic Philosophy in Qom.

Apart from having the responsibility of leading the congregational prayers at Imam Khomeini University in Qom for the last 15 years, one of his continuous works is to counsel people in ethical and spiritual matters. Despite his busy schedule, large numbers of students in Tehran and Qom regularly meet him for this purpose. After leading congregational prayers or conducting public classes, he humbly allocates time to meet with students, patiently listening to them one-by-one and guiding them in accordance with the true spirituality of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

Notable Works

1. Viewpoints of Scholars on Wilāyat al-Faqīh
2. The Viewpoints of Shaykh al-Mufīd in Kalām (Dogmatic Beliefs)
3. Islamic 'Irfān (Mysticism): Its Nature, Necessity and Goals
4. Sīmāy-i Mukhbitīn - A Commentary on Ziyārah Amīnullāh
5. Jilvehāy-i Lāhūtī - A Commentary on Ziyārah Jāmi'ah al-Kabīrah (three volumes)
6. Najvāy-i 'Ārifāni - A Commentary on the Munājāt al-Sha'bāniyyah
7. Bandigīy-i Haqīqī va Haqīqat-i 'Ilm (True Servitude and True Knowledge) - A Commentary on the *ḥadīth* of 'Unwān al-Baṣrī
8. 'Urūj-i 'Aql - A Commentary on the *ḥadīth* of the armies of the *'aql* (intellect) and the *jahl* (ignorance)
9. Bāzgasht bi Sūy-i Ū - A Commentary on the Munājāt al-Tā'ibīn
10. Dard-i Dil Bā Khudāwand - A Commentary on the Munājāt al-Shākīn
11. Risalat al-Ḥuqūq - A Commentrary on the treatise of rights by Imam Zayn al-'Ābidīn (peace be upon him)

PREFACE

Imam Sajjād (a) has produced many bountiful effects one of which is the collection of pure Islamic and human teachings which he presented in the form of 'rights' and has become well known by the name of Risālat al-Ḥuqūq (a treatise on rights). In this treatise, Imam Sajjād (peace be upon him) first addresses the right of Allah which is the most supreme right and the axis and root of all the other rights. Thereafter, he explains the right of human beings that they have upon themselves. In the next stage, he explains the rights of others upon a human being and considers these rights to be branches and corollaries of the first right.

In essence, the treatise on rights is an expounding of three rights. The first of them entails the responsibilities that human beings have with respect to Allah and their existential relation to Him (the right of Allah upon human beings, i.e. absolute submission). The second deals with the responsibilities of human beings with respect to themselves, their existential relationship with themselves, and the rights of their organs and body parts (the rights of human beings upon themselves). And the third one consists of the responsibilities of a human being towards other human beings and the rulings regarding their relationship with one another (the rights of others).

Before discussing the rights of other human beings, it is necessary to briefly speak about the reality and the essence of human beings and their position and status in the world of existence.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS

Without taking into consideration the views, theories and hypotheses of different schools of thought and academic research of the experts regarding this topic, it becomes clear by observing the existence of human beings that, firstly, they are made up of two dimensions: The material and the immaterial (spiritual). The basis and reality of their existence is found in the immaterial dimension which is the dimension responsible for their activities. And secondly, they are the beings who are connected and dependent upon the things and beings around them and are influenced by them and can also influence them.

This existential relationship between humans and other beings has two general types:

The first type is their relationship with dependent beings. This relationship is limited to outward and preparatory influences. This type of relation is what is studied in different fields of experimental sciences to determine the extent of its influence and its manner.

The second type is the relationship between human beings with the reality of their existence and the reality which is beyond the material world (metaphysical reality). This relationship is an affair of their spiritual dimension and can be comprehended by correctly employing one's cognitive faculties. It is as a result of this relationship that they can generally perceive the real purpose behind the creation of the world and the creation of human beings, and the path treading upon which is in conformity with the realities of the world, and then, can act according to it in order to attain the desired goal of their creation.

This type of existential relation places responsibilities and obligations upon human beings and they remain charged with them till the time that they are living in the world. So, human beings, like other beings similar to them, are dependent and created beings with this distinction that they have a higher purpose because they have

a special level of existence, and they can never attain that higher purpose without following an appropriate way and path.

Also, by contemplating the existence of human beings, it becomes clear that only the creator possesses all the perfections and He is the most knowledgeable being regarding the path which can make human beings reach their ultimate purpose. The real (existential) relationship that exists between human beings and their creator entails that, in the first stage, they fulfil their responsibilities in a desirable manner with respect to their creator, and in the second stage, they fulfil the responsibilities that the Exalted God has given them with regards to other beings.

In this valuable treatise, Imam Sajjād (peace be upon him) in a very elegant and eloquent way, first presents these relationships and rights in short, and then explains them in detail in an organised and orderly fashion.

Seeking Allah's help in fulfilling the rights of servitude

Imam Sajjād (peace be upon him) says the following at the end of the first part of the treatise regarding those who fulfil these rights: 'Blessed (pleased) is the one whom the Exalted Allah assisted in fulfilling the rights which He made obligatory upon him, and whom He made steadfast and successful in doing that.'

If we correctly understand the meaning of 'rights', then we will clearly understand that in order to achieve complete success in fulfilling the rights of Allah, there is no [other] way but to be humble before the holy existence of God and to seek His help. Even the prophets and men of God (*awliyā'*), despite having abundant knowledge and spiritual stations, did not ever neglect seeking help from the Exalted Allah, not even for a moment. The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), whose blessed existence was an infinite ocean of knowledge, in every moment, considered himself in need of assistance of the Exalted Allah.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RIGHTS

In the words of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him)

اعْلَمْ رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ أَنَّ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكَ حُقُوقاً مُحِيطَةً بِكَ فِي كُلِّ حَرَكَةٍ تَحَرَّكْتَهَا أَوْ سَكَنَةٍ سَكَنْتَهَا أَوْ مَنْزِلَةٍ نَزَلْتَهَا أَوْ جَارِحَةٍ قَلَبْتَهَا وَ آلَةٍ تَصَرَّفْتَ بِهَا بَعْضُهَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَ أَكْبَرُ حُقُوقِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ مَا أَوْجَبَهُ لِنَفْسِهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى مِنْ حَقِّهِ الَّذِي هُوَ أَصْلُ الْحُقُوقِ وَ مِنْهُ تَفَرَّعَ ثُمَّ أَوْجَبَهُ عَلَيْكَ لِنَفْسِكَ مِنْ قَرْنِكَ إِلَى قَدَمِكَ عَلَى اخْتِلَافِ جَوَارِحِكَ فَجَعَلَ لِبَصَرِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِسَمْعِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِلِسَانِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِيَدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِرِجْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِبَطْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِفَرْجِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً فَهَذِهِ الْجَوَارِحُ السَّبْعُ الَّتِي بِهَا تَكُونُ الْأَفْعَالُ

May Allah have mercy on you! Know that Allah has rights on you that encompass everything of yours. In every movement through which you move, every act of resting through which you rest, every waystation you descend upon, every body part you employ, or every tool you use [Allah has a right on you in all of these]. Some of these rights are greater than others. The greatest of Allah's rights on you is the right which Allah has made incumbent on you with respect to

Himself (the Provider of abundance and the Sublime), and which is the root of all rights. All other rights stem from it. Then, those which He has made incumbent on you in yourself, from your head to your foot, in keeping with the diversity of your body parts. He has given your sight a right on you, your hearing a right on you, your tongue a right on you, your hand a right on you, your leg a right on you, and your private parts a right on you. These are the seven body parts with which actions are performed.

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لِأَفْعَالِكَ عَلَيْكَ حُقُوقاً فَجَعَلَ لِصَلَاتِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِصَوْمِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِصَدَقَتِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِهَدْيِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً وَ لِأَفْعَالِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً ثُمَّ تَخْرُجُ الْحُقُوقُ مِنْكَ إِلَى غَيْرِكَ مِنْ ذَوِي الْحُقُوقِ الْوَاجِبَةِ عَلَيْكَ وَ أَوْجَبُهَا عَلَيْكَ حُقُوقُ أَئِمَّتِكَ ثُمَّ حُقُوقُ رَعِيَّتِكَ ثُمَّ حُقُوقُ رَحِمِكَ فَهَذِهِ حُقُوقٌ يَتَشَعَّبُ مِنْهَا حُقُوقٌ

Then, He (the Invincible and Majestic) gave your actions rights on you. He gave your prayer a right on you, your fasting a right on you, your charity a right on you, your sacrificial offering a right on you, and your [other] actions a right on you. Then these rights extend out from you to others who have rights on you. The most incumbent of them on you are the rights of your leaders, then the rights of your subjects, and then the rights of your womb relatives. From these rights branch out other rights.

فَحُقُوقُ أَئِمَّتِكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ أَوْجَبُهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ ثُمَّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ ثُمَّ حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْمِلْكِ وَ كُلُّ سَائِسٍ إِمَامٌ

The rights of your leaders are three. The most incumbent on you is the right of him who seeks your goodness and protection through

power, then the right of him who [is your teacher and] seeks your good interests through knowledge, then the right of him who [is your owner and] seeks your good interests through property. And verily, every manager who seeks the good interests of his subject is a leader.

وَ حُقُوقُ رَعِيَّتِكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ أَوْجَبُهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ ثُمَّ حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَإِنَّ الْجَاهِلَ رَعِيَّةُ الْعَالِمِ وَ حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْمِلْكِ مِنَ الْأَزْوَاجِ وَ مَا مَلَكْتَ مِنَ الْأَيْمَانِ

The rights of your subjects are three. The most incumbent on you is the right of those who are your subjects through authority, then the right of those who are your subjects through knowledge—for the ignorant man is the subject and subordinate of the scholar—then the rights of those who are your subjects through matrimony and through ownership.

وَ حُقُوقُ رَحِمِكَ كَثِيرَةٌ مُتَّصِلَةٌ بِقَدْرِ اتِّصَالِ الرَّحِمِ فِي الْقَرَابَةِ فَأَوْجَبُهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّ أُمِّكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَبِيكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ وُلْدِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَخِيكَ ثُمَّ الْأَقْرَبُ فَالْأَقْرَبُ وَ الْأَوَّلُ فَالْأَوَّلُ

The rights of your womb relatives are many. They are connected to you based on the proximity of their connection to the womb relationship. The most incumbent on you is the right of your mother, then the right of your father, then the right of your child, then the right of your brother. This continues for other relatives based on the closeness of your relationship with them.

ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَوْلَاكَ الْمُنْعِمِ عَلَيْكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَوْلَاكَ الْجَارِيَةِ نِعْمَتُكَ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ حَقُّ ذِي الْمَعْرُوفِ لَدَيْكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مُؤَذِّنِكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ ثُمَّ حَقُّ إِمَامِكَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ جَلِيسِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ جَارِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ صَاحِبِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ شَرِيكِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَالِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ غَرِيمِكَ الَّذِي تُطَالِبُهُ ثُمَّ حَقُّ غَرِيمِكَ الَّذِي يُطَالِبُكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ

خَلِيطِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ خَصْمِكَ الْمُدَّعِي عَلَيْكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ خَصْمِكَ
الَّذِي تَدَّعِي عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مُسْتَشِيرِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ الْمُشِيرِ عَلَيْكَ
ثُمَّ حَقُّ مُسْتَنْصِحِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ النَّاصِحِ لَكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ هُوَ
أَكْبَرُ مِنْكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ هُوَ أَصْغَرُ مِنْكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ سَائِلِكَ ثُمَّ
حَقُّ مَنْ سَأَلْتَهُ ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ جَرَى لَكَ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ مَسَاءَةٌ بِقَوْلٍ
أَوْ فِعْلٍ أَوْ مَسَرَّةٌ بِذَلِكَ بِقَوْلٍ أَوْ فِعْلٍ عَنْ تَعَمُّدٍ مِنْهُ أَوْ غَيْرِ
تَعَمُّدٍ مِنْهُ ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَهْلِ مِلَّتِكَ عَامَّةً ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ ثُمَّ
الْحُقُوقُ الْجَارِيَةُ بِقَدْرِ عِلَلِ الْأَحْوَالِ وَ تَصَرُّفِ الْأَسْبَابِ

Then there is the right of your master who favours you [by freeing you from slavery], then the right of the slave whom your favour reaches [by the fact that you free him], then the right of him who does a kind act toward you, then the right of the *mu'adhdhin* who calls you to prayer, then the right of the *imam* who leads the prayer, then the right of your sitting companion, then the right of your neighbour, then the right of your companion, then the right of your partner, then the right of your property, then the right of him who has a debt he must pay back to you, then the right of him to whom you owe a debt. Then the right of your associate, then the right of your adversary who has a claim against you, then the right of your adversary against whom you have a claim, then the right of him who asks you for advice, then the right of him whom you ask for advice, then the right of him who asks your counsel, then the right of him who counsels you, then the right of him who is older than you, then the right of him who is younger than you. Then the right of him who asks from you, then the right of him from whom you ask, then the right of him who does something evil to you by his words or deeds, or him who makes you happy by his words or deeds, be it intentionally or unintentionally, then the right of the people of your creed, then the right of the people under your protection,

then all the rights that arise due to the coming about of states and the occurrence of events.

فَطُوبَى لِمَنْ أَعَانَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قَضَاءِ مَا أَوْجَبَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ حُقُوقِهِ وَ وَفَّقَهُ وَ سَدَّدَه

Therefore, happy is he whom Allah aids in fulfilling the rights which He has made incumbent on him and whom He gives success therein and points in the proper direction![i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, 255-256.

DETAILED EXPLANATIONS OF THE RIGHTS

1

THE RIGHT OF ALLAH

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ اللَّهِ الْأَكْبَرُ فَإِنَّكَ تَعْبُدُهُ لَا تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئاً فَإِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ بِإِخْلَاصٍ جَعَلَ لَكَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ أَنْ يَكْفِيَكَ أَمْرَ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْآخِرَةِ وَ يَحْفَظَ لَكَ مَا تُحِبُّ مِنْهَا

And as for the great right of Allah, it is that you worship Him without associating anything with Him. When you do that with sincerity, He has made it binding on Himself to suffice you in your affairs of the world and the hereafter, and to protect for you that which you love therein [in both this world and the hereafter].[i]

MEANINGS AND TYPES OF HAQQ

Before presenting a detailed explanation of the different rights that Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has talked about in this treatise, it is necessary to explain the different meanings and types of *ḥaqq*. This will clarify which meaning is being used and which type of *ḥaqq* is being implied.

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 256.

The Lexical Meaning of Haqq

The original meaning of the word *ḥaqq* is to be in accordance with, or to be in conformance with. For example, the conformance of the bottom of a door with the walls beside which the door has been installed.[i] However, the word *ḥaqq* is used in other contexts too, such as: the creator of something who creates according to wisdom, something that has been created according to wisdom, speech and belief that is in conformance with reality, as well as an act or speech that must occur with a certain frequency and at a necessary time.

Instances of Haqq in the Noble Qur'ān

The word *ḥaqq* has been used in the Noble Qur'ān with different meanings and for different instances, and in all those instances, a sense of remaining firm, establishment and persistence has been intended. Some of these usages in the Qur'ān are as follows:

1. Absolute existence: In some instances, *ḥaqq* is used to mean that something exists, in a manner such that it has not taken its existence from anything else. As per this meaning, only the sacred existence of Allah is *ḥaqq*.[ii]

2. The actions of God: The Noble Qur'ān introduces the creation of beings, the appointment of Divine messengers, and the sending down of heavenly books as *ḥaqq*. This means that these actions have been performed with a purpose and goal that is true (*ḥaqq*); invalidity and falsehood have absolutely no role in them.[iii]

3. The foretelling of events by God: The definitive occurrence of events has been foretold in a manner that is true (*ḥaqq*).[iv]

4. Attributes of God such as *rubūbiyyah*[v] and guardianship:

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i. Al-mufradāt, under the root *ha-qāf-qāf*.

ii. Qur'ān 6:62, 10:32, 20:114, 22:6, and 22:26.

iii. Qur'ān 15:85 and 2:119.

iv. Qur'ān 6:73.

v. *Rubūbiyyah* is a noun that indicates the position that the *rabb* holds. If *rabb* is translated as Lord, then *rubūbiyyah* would be Lordship. However, the word stems

As per the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, the creation of God come into existence through His names and attributes, and because Allah is absolute *ḥaqq* and His names and attributes are also *ḥaqq*, therefore His creation is not futile and in vain, rather it is *ḥaqq*. Describing these attributes of Allah as being *ḥaqq* means that the existence of all beings and the continuation of their existence is under the real guardianship and rulership of Allah.[i]

5. The human's and God's actions: In the Noble Qur'ān, the actions of the human being are sometimes described as being *ḥaqq* or being befitting. Elsewhere they are described as not being *ḥaqq* or being unbefitting and unlawful. This meaning of *ḥaqq* is the legal meaning and arises because a right has been legislated in favour of someone or against someone. Such rights can be legislated by the society or by the Divine Legislator.[ii]

6. Judgment: Sometimes, correct judgment is described as *ḥaqq*. These judgments could pertain to this world or of the hereafter, and they could be judgments of God or of the human.[iii]

7. Duty and responsibility.

Analysing Ḥaqq in the Meaning of Responsibility

By considering the various meanings of the word *ḥaqq* and its prevalent usages, it can be concluded that the most popular of its usages among people as well as in the human sciences is its legal meaning, that is, responsibility and duty. This responsibility and duty can be between people themselves or between them and their creator.

Responsibility, from one point of view, is of two types: compulsory and non-compulsory. The compulsory responsibilities are themselves

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from the verb *rabba* meaning to nurture or train something until it reaches its perfection. Thus, Trainer or Nurturer may be a more appropriate translation of *rabb*. (Ed.)

i. Qur'ān 10:30 and 10:32.

ii. This is mainly used in the field of law. It is used in the Qur'ān too, see verses 2:282, and 51:19.

iii. Qur'ān 40:20 and 38:26.

either related to *fiqhī* laws (pertaining to Islamic jurisprudence) or related to laws that are prevalent among people. Laws from the first category (compulsory *fiqhī* laws) are sometimes called *ḥukm fiqhī*. Examples of this include the obligation of the ritual prayer, the obligation of enjoining the good (*amr bi al-ma'rūf*), the obligation of struggling against the enemy (*jihād*) for the sake of Allah, the obligation of returning a trust (*amānah*) to its rightful owner, as well as rulings related to the validity or invalidity of acts of worship or transactions.

The second category (compulsory laws prevalent among people) is generally in relation to the social actions of individuals and their rights towards one another. For example, the rights of a wife on her husband, the rights of pedestrians on drivers, the rights of consumers, or the rights of producers. To not fulfil these laws causes the human to be rebuked by others, and in addition leads to punishment in this world or the hereafter.

As for non-compulsory responsibilities, some of them fall under the scope of *fiqhī* rulings, and are called recommended acts, disliked acts, or permissible acts. However, other non-compulsory responsibilities, be they individual or social responsibilities, have an *akhlāqī* dimension rather than a *fiqhī* one.[i] For example, *akhlāqī* responsibilities of a person with respect to Allah, or with respect to his own body parts, or responsibilities such as giving, sacrificing, desiring good for others, having good behaviour, generosity and showing mercy towards one's subordinates.

THE SOURCE AND FOUNDATION OF RIGHTS

In addition to this, He placed all other beings under the human's control,[ii] and by taking into account all these special attributes, He

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i. *Akhlāq*, as will be clarified in the upcoming page, concerns itself with the traits of an individual's heart. It is the plural of the word *khuluq* that means a trait or characteristic. (Ed.)

ii. Qur'ān 45:13.

exclusively addressed the human as moving towards Him.[i]

The human being's existence in this world has these special attributes and due to these attributes, it is clear that he will rebel and transgress his limits. Therefore, Allah has also addressed him as being needy,[ii] and has sent guides for him who are aware of the realities and the way to reach Him. These guides are the prophets and *awliyā'* of Allah, who are infallible and safe from error. In addition, He also sent down Divine books that illustrate the reality. All this is because the human on his own is not capable of completely understanding his relationship with his creator, the true purpose of his creation and the correct and complete way to attain that purpose.

THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF ALLAH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BEINGS

By carefully observing the different dimensions of the relationships that all beings, particularly the human, have with their creator, it can be understood that in all these dimensions, they are completely dependent on Allah. In many verses, the Noble Qur'ān points us towards this reality, so that we become aware, become awakened, be reminded, and then arrange our lives and activities in accordance with this understanding. In this way, we can attain the perfections worthy of us. These different dimensions are as follows:

1. The Relationship of Khāliqiyyah

The first real relationship between Allah and other beings that is understood by the human intellect, is the relationship of creation. The Noble Qur'ān mentions this relationship by using the term *khāliqiyyah*.[iii] God's creation, unlike the things made by the human, is without any precedent. It even differs from the miracles of prophets which have preparatory conditions and precedents. For example, in

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i. Qur'ān 84:6.

ii. Qur'ān 35:15.

iii. Qur'ān 39:62.

the event where Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be upon him) created a bird from clay with Allah's permission, the clay and the species of bird were existent from beforehand. A new property came to be, or in a sense, existing matter transformed from one type to another. Likewise, even though bringing the dead back to life is beyond ordinary human power and has occurred through the mediation of prophets and *awliyāʾ* of Allah who rely on the eternal power of God, it is also just a transformation from one state to another. However, the creating of God is the creating of a being without any precedent whatsoever. [i]

On the other hand, even though every being, due to being limited, needs relationships with other beings to continue its own existence, it always seeks the actualization of the preliminaries of these relationships and the fulfilment of its needs from Allah. Thus, in the same way that all beings need God in their original creation, they also need Him in the continuation of their existence. [ii] This is because all beings, both material and immaterial, are nothing but poverty and dependence before God. [iii] It is God who fulfils their existential needs, not that He creates them and abandons them like the builder of a building.

2. The Relationship of Rubūbiyyah and its Types

The lexical meaning of the Arabic word *rabb* is an owner who has power over something, manages it and nurtures it. [iv] As a technical term, the relationship of *rubūbiyyah* refers to the second real relationship between beings and the *rabb* of all worlds. Beings are not only in need of God in their creation, but all the affairs of their existence are also dependent on Him, and He can influence them and

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i. Qurʾān 5:110.

ii. Qurʾān 55:29.

iii. That is, their very existence is not from themselves, nor are the corollaries of their existence, nor anything associated with them, nor anything they have power over.

iv. al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-mufradāt*, p. 292; al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 1, p. 19.

manage their affairs in any way He wills. This type of relationship is called the relationship of *rubūbiyyah* which entails management of their affairs and involves many things such as protecting and safeguarding, giving life and taking it away, giving sustenance, making beings grow and attain perfection, as well as guiding and issuing commandments for them.

Due to the different types of beings, *rubūbiyyah* in the sense of Allah's management of affairs and nurturing of beings is of two types:

2-1. Existential Rubūbiyyah

By observing the way beings are created, it can be comprehended that Allah has a general form of management and nurturing which encompasses all beings including plants, animals, and human beings. This management is through fulfilling all their needs, through providing the tools and preliminaries for feeding, growth, reproduction, etc. In other words, existential *rubūbiyyah* here means providing all the preliminaries and tools of attaining perfection and making all beings reach the appropriate goal for their existence.

In this way, the *khāliqiyyah* of Allah encompasses all of existence including involuntary [i] as well as voluntary effects at every level. Thus, effects and actions—such as hearing, seeing, and talking—belong to the human and are attributed to him as they have been performed through his free will. But at the same time, they are also the creation of God because He has placed free will and the prerequisites to voluntary acts in the existence of the human and He constantly emanates power and free will in them. [ii]

Sometimes, due to his negligence and being influenced by other beings, the human imagines that the beings of this world are

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i. Such as, matters related to the workings of the body and its natural effects. Or the involuntary effects of beings such as the sun (light, heat, and energy). These beings are created such that their existence is alongside their effects, and they are directly attributed to God. For example, God created the sun such that it has light, heat, and energy.

ii. Qur'ān 37:96.

independent in managing their own affairs! But in many verses of the Qur'ān, Allah advises the human to think and contemplate on the precise system of creation so that he comes out of this fantasy of polytheism (*shirk*) and avoids its effects. By doing so he can utilize his intellect and acquire certainty regarding the signs of his *rabb*.[i]

The human sowing a seed in the ground is just a minor preliminary so that Allah emanates growth to it, and it turns into a plant.[ii] Likewise is the sperm that enters the womb and from which a child is created; the parents only play a preparatory role for God to give existence to the child.[iii] Even cloning, which is a new human activity, takes place by utilizing supporting factors that already exist and by taking help from other beings. It is not a new creation such that the human can be considered as an independent creator. Rather, what the human does in this case is utilize the intellect and the ability to plan that has been created by Allah inside the human's own system of existence as well as in the world at large.

2-2. Legislative Rubūbiyyah

The human being has been created in such a way that he performs most of his actions due to the benefits yielded by those actions. For example, when a person has no more energy and is hungry, he feels a need within himself. To fulfil that need, he uses his intellect and comprehends that eating is in his best interest and is beneficial for him, and thus he decides to eat food. By taking certain steps like preparing the food, he then eats and attains the benefits of eating. However, the human does not comprehend all that is in his best interest, especially with regards to spiritual matters. This is because spiritual matters, in most cases, cannot be perceived by the human's senses, and their reality is profound. This is while the human has vast potentials and deep inclinations, such as the inclination towards

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i. Qur'ān 3:190.

ii. Qur'ān 56:64.

iii. Qur'ān 56:58-59.

infinite perfection and the inclination for acquiring infinite realities. Therefore, on his own, the human is not capable of comprehending, managing, and guiding these potentials and inclinations of his. He needs direction and guidance from the reator of these inclinations and perfections.

Allah has stated these directions in the sources of religious knowledge (the Qur'ān, the *sunnah*, and the intellect) by stating what is permissible, what is prohibited, and so on. As a result, the human can choose the path of felicity and perfection with his own free will. This guidance and training by God is known as legislative *rubūbiyyah*.

Therefore, even though the human's intellect can correctly understand the material benefits of his own actions, the human soul seeks perfections that are beyond this material world and beyond the understanding of the intellect. Because these perfections cannot be attained in the framework of this material world, the intellect clearly concludes the need to follow those who have attained those perfections and have been chosen by God to guide others.[i]

3. The Relationship of Servitude

Beings created by Allah are dependent and have no self-sufficiency, not even for a moment, in any position or at any stage. This is seen in how these beings have different states and conditions, for example, their states change, they are susceptible to influences and have limitations. Their existence, therefore, is always humble before Allah, their creator.[ii]

In some verses of the Qur'ān, all beings are considered to be performing prostration (*sajdah*) before Allah, glorifying and praising Him. Of course, the prostration of every being is according to its level of existence. The prostration specific to the human is performed by putting the head—the highest body part of the human's existence—as well as other body parts on the ground, the lowest of places. The

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i. Qur'ān 10:35.

ii. Qur'ān 19:93.

prostration of other beings, however, is the very humility which their existence has before Allah. The human, however, cannot comprehend the glorification performed by other beings with his ordinary faculties of perception; the human's perception is weak and afflicted with the material world.[i] However, when the human rids himself of his attention and attachments to the material world, he acquires a higher ability to perceive and becomes capable of comprehending the glorification performed by other beings. It is narrated regarding the late Ākhūnd Kāshī,[ii] who is buried in Takht-i Fūlād in the city of Isfahan, that whenever he engaged in the remembrance (dhikr) of Allah, the doors and walls around him would also engage in remembrance. Moreover, in addition to the fact that he used to hear their remembrance himself, he was so strong spiritually that whoever passed by his room would also hear their remembrance.

THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S REAL RIGHT

By keenly observing the way in which the beings of this world came into existence, the intellect concludes that their existence must rely on an independent cause. On the other hand, the intellect also concludes that the beings of this world have a responsibility with respect to this real relationship that they have with their creator.

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i. Qur'ān 17:44.

ii. Ayatullah Mullā Muḥammad Kāshānī (1233-1323 AH), famously known as "Ākhūnd Kāshī", was born in the city of Kashan and later lived in Isfahan. He studied both the traditional and intellectual studies to the highest of levels; in addition to the fields of jurisprudence, the principals of jurisprudence, and philosophy, he had also mastered Arabic, Persian grammar, as well as mathematics. He used to teach in the *Madresey-i ṣadr* school in Isfahan. He was a contemporary of another well known philosopher by the name of Jahāngīr Khān Qashqā'ī. Due to the presence of these two personalities, students interested in philosophy came from far and wide to the city of Isfahan. One of Ākhūnd Kāshī's well-known students was Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī, the primary *marja'* of the Shī'ah community prior to Ayatullah Burūjerdī. This great *faqīh* and mystic passed away after a life of worship and asceticism, on the twentieth of Sha'bān in the year 1323 AH. May Allah elevate his rank. (Ed.)

This responsibility is that of showing humility before their creator and is manifested by obeying His commandments.

In general, there are two types of obedience and servitude that beings have towards the Creator of the worlds:

First: The obedience which, in the existential sense, is alongside the existence of every being. This means that beings are under the command of Allah with regards to the creation and the continuation of their existence as well as in all their affairs such as sleep and wakefulness, youth and old age, or health and illness. With regards to this kind of obedience, it is not possible for them to disobey God.[i]

Second: The obedience that takes place through a kind of knowledge and choice and is specific to those beings that possess intelligence and freewill, like the human being and jinn. This kind of obedience relies on knowledge as well as freewill; the human being and jinn are free to accept it or reject it. Allah has introduced this obedience as being the main purpose of creating the human and jinn:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

> I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship Me. (51:56)

Therefore, fulfilment of the real right of God occurs when the human displays obedience and servitude towards Him, with awareness and out of free selection.

SINCERE SERVITUDE

As explained, worship and servitude mean to show humility before Allah. The discussion of worship rotates around the human, who possesses different dimensions such as beliefs, *akhlāq* and actions. As a result, the human's sincere servitude is related to all the dimensions of his existence, and attaining sincere servitude requires specific conditions pertaining to each of these dimensions. It is thus necessary that the meaning and attributes of sincere servitude in each dimension

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i. Qur'ān 24:41.

be clarified so that they can then be realized. True sincere servitude is that which is approved by Allah and by the sound intellect, for if this is not the case then the person has, in reality, worshipped other gods (e.g., Shayṭān, or the desires of the self).

Before mentioning the dimensions of sincere servitude, it is necessary to briefly mention the meaning of sincerity (*ikhlās*), its importance, and necessity.

The Meaning of Sincerity

The Arabic word *khālis* means pure. Something is called *khālis* when the signs of it being mixed with something else have been removed. In terms of its technical terminology, an action with *ikhlās* is a righteous action in whose performance there is no expectation other than the rewards of the hereafter or praise from Allah. In this manner, the reality of *ikhlās* is to "disassociate oneself from everything except Allah."[i]

Sincerity is the opposite of ostentation (*riyā'*). Ostentation in worship means to perform worship for other than Allah, or to take a partner other than Allah in it. Ostentation invalidates acts of worship such as prayers and fasting, because the sincere intention of gaining proximity to Allah is one of the conditions of such worship. However, ostentation does not invalidate obligatory actions that do not have such a condition, like transactions or avoiding prohibited actions. Nonetheless, the human is deprived from the spiritual effect of performing such obligatory actions when he does not have such a sincere intention.

While performing sincere actions, as per Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), the praise of others has no importance for the human. This is because a sincere person has purified himself from the impurities of the world and its affairs such as gaining popularity, acquiring position, money, and wealth. In return for their actions, they only expect praise and gratitude from the Glorious and Honourable

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i. al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-mufradāt*, p. 249.

Lord.[i]

The Importance and Necessity of Sincerity

To comprehend the importance of sincerity, it is enough to realize that Allah created the heavens and the earth so that they be in service of the human and so that the human can be tested, and it is only by performing righteous and sincere actions in the face of this test, that the human can reach the pinnacle of his perfection.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

> It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days—and His Throne was [then] upon the waters—that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct. (11:7)

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) was asked about the phrase, 'best in conduct' in the above verse. He said,

لَيْسَ يَعْنِي أَكْثَرَ عَمَلًا وَ لَكِنْ أَصْوَبَكُمْ عَمَلا

> It does not mean abundant actions, rather, it means the sincerest[ii] actions.[iii]

The primary goal of religion is to allow the human to reach

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 16, no. 4.

وَ الْعَمَلُ الْخَالِصُ الَّذِي لَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ يَحْمَدَكَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

And the sincere action is that which you do not seek that anyone other than Allah (the Invincible and the Majestic) praises you for it.

ii. The word *aṣwab* literally means 'the most correct'. However, the continuation of the blessed narration shows that the Imam (peace be upon him) intended "the sincerest", and the author (may Allah protect him) had thus translated it into Persian like that. (Ed.)

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 16, no. 4.

the station of sincerity,[i] and to thereby attain the highest levels of faith.[ii] Those who have attained high levels of faith, all their actions are sincere, and it is in this way that they fulfil Allah's right of servitude. The necessity of benefitting from sincerity has been emphasized so much that Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says, that only sincere actions performed out of Allah's fear and with a truthful intention, have a reality.[iii] On the Day of Judgment, when the heavens will be rolled up and the earth transformed, it is only these actions that will remain.

When the importance and necessity of sincerity is considered, along with this fact that sincerity means to cleanse one's interior from impurities, it can be concluded that to acquire sincerity is much more difficult than simply performing the exterior action.[iv] It requires more self-discipline to attain. Moreover, to preserve such sincerity until one reaches the desired goal is more difficult than the previous

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 727.

الْإِخْلَاصُ غَايَةُ الدِّين

Sincerity is the ultimate goal of religion.

ii. Ibid, no. 859.

الْإِخْلَاصُ أَعْلَى الْإِيمَان

Sincerity is the highest of faith.

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 16, no 4. This is the continuation of the narration, coming after the portion quoted in the text above.

... وَ إِنَّمَا الْإِصَابَةُ خَشْيَةُ اللَّهِ وَ النِّيَّةُ الصَّادِقَةُ

And indeed, to act correctly [sincerely] means [actions that are based on] Allah's fear and a truthful intention...

iv. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 24.

تَصْفِيَةُ الْعَمَلِ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ وَ تَخْلِيصُ النِّيَّةِ مِنَ الْفَسَادِ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الْعَامِلِينَ مِنْ طُولِ الْجِهَادِ

To purify an action is harder than the action itself, and to free it from corruption is harder for those who truly act than engaging in a lengthy jihad.

stages.[i]

Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) narrates from his forefathers that Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) said,

الدُّنْيَا كُلُّهَا جَهْلٌ إِلَّا مَوَاضِعَ الْعِلْمِ وَ الْعِلْمُ كُلُّهُ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا مَا عُمِلَ بِهِ وَ الْعَمَلُ كُلُّهُ رِيَاءٌ إِلَّا مَا كَانَ مُخْلَصاً وَ الْإِخْلَاصُ عَلَى خَطَرٍ حَتَّى يَنْظُرَ الْعَبْدُ بِمَا يُخْتَمُ لَهُ

All the world is ignorance except the places of knowledge. All knowledge is an argument against the human [he will be held to account due to it] except that which is acted upon. All actions are ostentation except that performed with sincerity. And sincerity is vulnerable to danger until the servant sees the end of his actions [that is he sees: did he preserve his sincerity till the end or not?][ii]

Therefore, we must always entrust ourselves to Allah and seek His help so that we attain a good end.

Dimensions of Sincere Servitude

As mentioned before, the human has different dimensions such as those of beliefs, *akhlāq* and actions. Sincere servitude is related to all the dimensions of his existence.

1. The Dimension of Beliefs

The forming of the human's awareness and his beliefs regarding himself and the world constitutes the foundation of his activities in this world. Moreover, it is also what distinguishes him from other beings. Even the activities related to his soul are constantly influenced

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i. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 16, no. 4.

الْإِبْقَاءُ عَلَى الْعَمَلِ حَتَّى يَخْلُصَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ

To persist on an action until it is sincerely performed, is harder than the action itself.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 67, p. 242, no. 9.

by the human's thinking and beliefs. Therefore, the more carefully a person uses his intellect to acquire a correct understanding, the more he will be able to prepare the grounds to refine his *akhlāq* and actions. On the other hand, if he does not carefully and correctly utilize his intellect, then the little success that he achieves in terms of his *akhlāq* and his actions will be weak and void of benefits.

The intellect dictates that to attain real felicity, one must be careful and precise in matters of thinking and beliefs. In addition to that, the Divine religions, specifically Islam, also attach special importance to the dimensions of the human's beliefs and faith. This dimension of beliefs encompasses monotheism (*tawhīd*) in actions, monotheism in attributes, and monotheism in essence, the explanation of which is beyond of the scope of this book.

1.1 Belief in the Intermediaries of Divine Emanation (Fayḍ)

Allah created the beings of this world as prerequisite to the existence of the human.[i] In addition, the purpose behind the creation of this world is to actualize the station of God's viceregency in the human through sincere servitude. As a result of this, to make the human reach that station of Divine viceregency, Allah made the prophets and messengers be the intermediaries between the human and Himself. It is by obeying these prophets that the human attains servitude of Allah.[ii] Also, He made the obedience of those charged with authority (*ulū al-amr*) obligatory, as they are the successors of His messenger.[iii] Allah considers this kind of obedience as an example of His own obedience.[iv] Therefore, believing in the intermediaries of Divine Emanation is an extension of the belief in monotheism, and sincere servitude towards God demands such

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i. Qur'ān 2:29.

ii. Qur'ān 4:64.

iii. Qur'ān 4:59.

iv. Qur'ān 4:80.

belief.[i]

The meaning of this belief is that every religion, messenger, and Divine book is true with respect to its own time and obedience towards it is necessary during that time. In the present time, it is necessary to believe that the seal of the prophets, Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), is the messenger, and that the twelve Imams after him are his successors, along with the necessity of obeying them. It is only with this belief that the main pillar of sincere servitude is actualized.

2. Dimension of Akhlāq

In addition to acquiring correct beliefs regarding himself, the world, and its creator, to reach his real perfection the human must acquire certain *akhlāqī* attributes in his soul. Therefore, he must first recognize which attributes are suitable and in conformity with his soul and his reality so that he then pursues them through his actions. It is with the help of those attributes that he can reach the felicity of this world and the hereafter. Secondly, he must know that it is only his creator who knows how to make the human attain that high goal and it is only He who can make the human aware of these attributes. Therefore, sincere servitude to Allah demands that the human only follow His guidelines, in order to recognize and rectify the attributes of the soul and to acquire good attributes.

3. Dimension of Actions

The human being has been created in such a way that his reality and essence is formed by his beliefs and the *akhlāqī* attributes of his soul, as well as by his actions in different aspects of life. Therefore, whatever his beliefs and knowledge are (be they godly or ungodly), his actions shall also be in that same manner. Sincere servitude to God in this dimension demands that the human sincerely obey God and His *awliyā'*, in all his actions.

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i. Qur'ān 2:285.

The Condition of Attaining Sincere Servitude

Every being in this world is created for a particular purpose and to acquire certain perfections. There are conditions for every being to reach this purpose and for their perfections to manifest. Without fulfilling these conditions, this purpose will not be reached, these perfections will remain unmanifested, and the being's existence will be futile. Such is the case for the human. To attain sincere servitude towards God—which is the purpose of his creation—he must fulfil some primary conditions. With these conditions, the human attains the first level of servitude. These primary conditions are having correct beliefs regarding the origin (creation), the end (resurrection), religion and the Divine leaders, and then acting on religious commandments to the required extent and with the intention of obeying God's commands. These commandments consist of obligatory, prohibited, recommended, disliked and permissible acts. In the following level, observing *akhlāqī* responsibilities, performing recommended acts, refraining from disliked acts with the intention of servitude to God, and giving a Divine direction to permissible acts, all have a fundamental effect on attaining higher levels of sincerity and servitude.

The Effect of The Human's Level of Knowledge on Servitude

Because the human possesses the different dimensions of beliefs, *akhlāq* and actions, his sincere servitude is dependent on all these dimensions. From among these dimensions, the primary dimension is that of his beliefs. Hence, the more correct and the deeper this dimension is, the more prepared the human is for attaining sincere servitude and its spiritual results.

On the other hand, the extent of correctness and depth of an individual's beliefs is dependent on the extent that they take advantage of their intellect (*'aql*) and ability to comprehend, which are blessings granted to them by Allah.

Someone said to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "So-and-so possesses a great station in terms of worshipping, religion and

virtuousness."

The Imam said to him, "How is his intellect?"

He replied, "I don't know!"

The Imam then said, "Verily, reward is in proportion with the degree of intellect."

And then in continuation he said,

إِنَّ رَجُلًا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَانَ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ فِي جَزِيرَةٍ مِنْ جَزَائِرِ الْبَحْرِ خَضْرَاءَ نَضِرَةٍ كَثِيرَةِ الشَّجَرِ ظَاهِرَةِ الْمَاءِ وَ إِنَّ مَلَكاً مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مَرَّ بِهِ فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ أَرِنِي ثَوَابَ عَبْدِكَ هَذَا فَأَرَاهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى ذَلِكَ فَاسْتَقَلَّهُ الْمَلَكُ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ أَنِ اصْحَبْهُ فَأَتَاهُ الْمَلَكُ فِي صُورَةِ إِنْسِيٍّ فَقَالَ لَهُ مَنْ أَنْتَ قَالَ أَنَا رَجُلٌ عَابِدٌ بَلَغَنِي مَكَانُكَ وَ عِبَادَتُكَ فِي هَذَا الْمَكَانِ فَأَتَيْتُكَ لِأَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مَعَكَ فَكَانَ مَعَهُ يَوْمَهُ ذَلِكَ فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحَ قَالَ لَهُ الْمَلَكُ إِنَّ مَكَانَكَ لَنَزِهٌ وَ مَا يَصْلُحُ إِلَّا لِلْعِبَادَةِ فَقَالَ لَهُ الْعَابِدُ إِنَّ لِمَكَانِنَا هَذَا عَيْباً فَقَالَ لَهُ وَ مَا هُوَ قَالَ لَيْسَ لِرَبِّنَا بَهِيمَةٌ فَلَوْ كَانَ لَهُ حِمَارٌ رَعَيْنَاهُ فِي هَذَا الْمَوْضِعِ فَإِنَّ هَذَا الْحَشِيشَ يَضِيعُ فَقَالَ لَهُ ذَلِكَ الْمَلَكُ وَ مَا لِرَبِّكَ حِمَارٌ فَقَالَ لَوْ كَانَ لَهُ حِمَارٌ مَا كَانَ يَضِيعُ مِثْلُ هَذَا الْحَشِيشِ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَى الْمَلَكِ إِنَّمَا أُثِيبُهُ عَلَى قَدْرِ عَقْلِهِ.

A man from Banī Isrā'īl used to worship Allah on an island which was full of greenery, had many trees and water. An angel from among the angels passed by him and said, "O God! Show me the rewards of this servant of yours." Allah the Exalted showed that to the angel, but the angel found the reward to be little [compared to the abundance of worship he was performing]. Thus, Allah revealed to him, "Accompany him." The angel came to

him in the form of a human. The worshipper said to him, "Who are you?" The angel said, "I am a worshipper. The news of your location and your worship in this location reached me, so I came to worship Allah alongside you." He was with the worshipper for the entire day. When the morning dawned, the angel said to him, "This place of yours is full of greenery and is not suitable for anything but worship!" The worshipper said to him, "But this place has one defect!" The angel asked, "What is its defect?" The worshipper said, "Our Lord does not have an animal. If He had a donkey, we would have brought it here for grazing. All this greenery is going to waste!" The angel said to him, "Your Lord does not have a donkey!" The worshipper said, "If He had a donkey, this greenery would not have gone to waste." Then Allah revealed to the angel, "I will only reward him in proportion with the degree of his intellect (*'aql*)."[i]

It can be deduced from the traditions of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) that the faithful have different levels in their servitude towards Allah due to their different levels of comprehension.[ii] It is true that all of them are faithful, that their servitude is accepted

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 11, no. 8.

ii. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 87, no. 1.

مَنْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ بِالتَّوَهُّمِ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ وَ مَنْ عَبَدَ الِاسْمَ دُونَ الْمَعْنَى فَقَدْ كَفَرَ وَ مَنْ عَبَدَ الِاسْمَ وَ الْمَعْنَى فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ وَ مَنْ عَبَدَ الْمَعْنَى بِإِيقَاعِ الْأَسْمَاءِ عَلَيْهِ بِصِفَاتِهِ الَّتِي وَصَفَ بِهَا نَفْسَهُ فَعَقَدَ عَلَيْهِ قَلْبَهُ وَ نَطَقَ بِهِ لِسَانُهُ فِي سَرَائِرِهِ وَ عَلَانِيَتِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع حَقّاً...

Whoever worships Allah based on imagination has certainly disbelieved. And whoever worships the name but not the meaning has certainly disbelieved. And whoever worships both the name and the meaning, has ascribed a partner to Allah. And [as for] the one who worships the meaning by projecting the names upon it, using those same attributes that He has described Himself with, then if such individuals attach their hearts to this belief, uttering it with their tongue both privately and publicly, truly they are the companions of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) ...

by Allah at its respective level, that it will result in the effects that servitude entails, and that if righteous deeds are also performed alongside this faith then they will possess the first level of felicity and salvation. But beyond this, some of them are real believers and are among the companions of Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him), due to their high and correct level of comprehension. Therefore, in the verses of Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, different levels have been mentioned for faith (*īmān*), disbelief (*kufr*), polytheism (*shirk*) and hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

The Best Method of Actualizing Sincere Servitude

After the first level of Allah's servitude has been clearly understood, it should be known that this necessary level of servitude has been mentioned in the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* along with the best method to actualize it, and that this is possible for everyone to attain. This method is the following sequential process:

1. Self-Stipulation (Mushāraṭah)

This must be performed in the following manner. A faithful individual, in the beginning of each day, must turn their attention to their self and inculcate in it the responsibilities it has during the day and night with respect to its actions and behaviours. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says,

كُنْ وَصِيَّ نَفْسِكَ

Advise and admonish yourself.[i]

2. Being Vigilant (Murāqabah)

This must be performed in the following manner. Throughout the day and night, the human must be attentive, in the manner that Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says,

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 7171.

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ يَأْتِي عَلَى ابْنِ آدَمَ إِلَّا قَالَ لَهُ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا يَوْمٌ جَدِيدٌ وَ أَنَا عَلَيْكَ شَهِيدٌ فَقُلْ فِيَّ خَيْراً وَ اعْمَلْ فِيَّ خَيْراً أَشْهَدْ لَكَ بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَإِنَّكَ لَنْ تَرَانِي بَعْدَهَا أَبَداً

There is not a day that arrives for a person, except that it says to him, "O son of Ādam! I am a new day, and I am a witness over you, thus if you speak that which is good in me and perform good deeds in me, I will bear witness for you on the Day of Judgment. Verily, you shall never see me again." [i]

The state of the soul should be such that every day it is observant and careful as to what is it sending ahead for tomorrow (the Day of Judgment), [ii] and is diligent about performing the obligations of Allah and refraining from His prohibitions. Such vigilance causes a person to constantly busy themselves with rectifying their own self so that, through the remembrance of Allah and implementing His servitude in their lives, their soul overpowers their animalistic and satanic inclinations.

3. Self-Accounting (Muḥāsabah)

Since the human possesses inclinations towards the world, it is not certain that he will be successful in taking care of his self. It is not certain that he will be able to perform all the duties of servitude and refrain from all the prohibitions of God. However, by taking account of his self with regards to his actions, he can become certain about his success or failure in performing different levels of servitude to God. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says the following regarding the merits of self-evaluation,

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 523, no. 8.

ii. Qur'ān 59:18.

مَنْ حَاسَبَ نَفْسَهُ وَقَفَ عَلَى عُيُوبِهِ وَ أَحَاطَ بِذُنُوبِهِ وَ اسْتَقَالَ الذُّنُوبَ وَ أَصْلَحَ الْعُيُوب

One who takes account of his self, becomes aware of his defects, thoroughly grasps his sins, [and as a result] he seeks forgiveness for the sins and rectifies the defects. (i)

He also says the following about how to perform this self-accounting:

عَلَى الْعَاقِلِ أَنْ يُحْصِيَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ مَسَاوِيَهَا فِي الدِّينِ وَ الرَّأْيِ وَ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَ الْأَدَبِ فَيَجْمَعَ ذَلِكَ فِي صَدْرِهِ أَوْ فِي كِتَابٍ وَ يَعْمَلَ فِي إِزَالَتِهَا

It is incumbent on an intelligent person that he lists his evil traits pertaining to religion, beliefs, *akhlāq* and etiquette and records them in his heart or in a book and then strives to eliminate them. (ii)

Self- accounting is so important that Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him) says,

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ يَوْم

He is not from us, one who does not take account of his soul each day. (iii)

4. Reproaching and Reprimanding

Sometimes the soul enters a state of transgression. Thus, it is necessary that the human reproach his soul, remind it of its position with respect to God, and reprimand it. The best form of reprimanding is to strive persistently to carry out one's responsibilities by renewing the decision which the person took at the beginning of the day. Imam

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 8927.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 6, no. 58.

iii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 396.

ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ ذَمَّ نَفْسَهُ أَصْلَحَهَا

One who reproaches their soul has rectified it.[i]

However, the reprimanding of the soul requires awareness about religious duties and what has been prohibited in the various dimensions of life. We have tried to indicate these duties and prohibitions in this book, to the extent necessary for a faithful individual. It also requires that one constantly listen to and read the admonitions of the *awliyāʾ* of Allah, so that their soul is always in a state of awareness and the life of this world does not make it heedless. Lastly, it also requires being in contact with a religious scholar so that one becomes aware of the specific rulings that pertain to their individual and social life and can then act on them.

Factors that Cause Sincerity

All states and attributes of the soul arise from intellectual factors as well as other states of the soul. When the appropriate factors are present, acquiring certain states and attributes becomes easier. Such is the case for sincerity, which is an important state of the human's existence; certain factors must be present in the human for sincerity to arise. Some of these factors are preliminaries to bringing about sincerity in the human's existence, while others are related to higher levels of sincerity. These factors are as follows:

1. True Desire

The first condition of succeeding on the path of attaining spiritual perfections is steadfastness and having a true desire for those perfections. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says,

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 233, no. 9103.

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَا أَطَّلِعُ عَلَى قَلْبِ عَبْدٍ فَأَعْلَمَ مِنْهُ حُبَّ الْإِخْلَاصِ لِطَاعَتِي لِوَجْهِي وَ ابْتِغَاءِ مَرْضَاتِي إِلَّا تَوَلَّيْتُ تَقْوِيمَهُ وَ سِيَاسَتَه

> Allah the Glorious and Honourable has said, "I do not watch over the heart of a servant and see that he is inclined to perform My obedience with sincerity and so that he acquires My pleasure, except that I then take his affairs into My hands, manage them and make that person reach their purpose." [i]

2. Acquiring Knowledge

For sincerity to come about in an action, one must be aware of the reality of that action, its conditions, and its characteristics. That's why Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) mentions knowledge as a necessary preliminary for acquiring sincerity. [ii]

3. Performing Acts of Worship

Sincerity is manifested through action. The human cannot ascertain his sincerity unless he starts to perform actions! To start moving towards acquiring sincerity, the best way is to start with acts of worship. That's why according to the Divine *sharīʿah*, the first necessary stage in the process of acquiring sincerity is to observe sincerity in acts of worship. [iii]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 82, p. 136, no. 16.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 4642.

ثَمَرَةُ الْعِلْمِ إِخْلَاصُ الْعَمَل

The fruit of knowledge is sincerity in action.

iii. Ibid., no 390.

الْإِخْلَاصُ ثَمَرَةُ الْعِبَادَة

Sincerity is the fruit of worship.

4. Decreasing Āmāl

The main attention of someone seeking sincerity is towards that which is with Allah. Thus, such a person should empty themselves of worldly motivations and attentions that stop them from reaching their purpose. The expectation and anticipation of attaining worldly affairs is referred to as *amal* (plural *āmāl*). In the life of this world, such *āmāl* are unavoidable. Thus, to attain real perfections, one must direct their āmāl in a Godly direction, and this is what is meant by "decreasing *āmāl*". Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says,

قَلِّلِ الْآمَالَ تَخْلُصْ لَكَ الْأَعْمَال

Decrease your *āmāl* so that your actions become sincere. [i]

Effects of Sincerity

Considering the positive effects of anything motivates the human towards that thing. Sincerity is of special importance in the human's existence, and it brings about important effects. Some of them are as follows:

1. Freedom from Impurities

After acquiring correct beliefs and strengthening them, two types of purity can be conceived for the human. Firstly, purity in one's actions from indecencies and lapses. Secondly, purity in one's intentions and motivations from anything other than God. The second type of purity is more difficult to acquire than the first, but it is also more honourable. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says,

مَنْ أَخْلَصَ النِّيَّةَ تَنَزَّهَ عَنِ الدَّنِيَّة

One who purifies their intention is purified from wretchedness. [ii]

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i. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 2906.

ii. Ibid., no. 8447.

2. Strength in Action

Because the reliance of a sincere person in their actions is always on Allah and they are not motivated by other than Him, they do not fear anything in performing good deeds and refraining from bad deeds. With this firm support, they persevere in their work. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says,

مَنْ أَخْلَصَ لِلَّهِ اسْتَظْهَرَ لِمَعَاشِهِ وَ مَعَادِهِ

One who makes himself sincere for Allah, is strengthened in their life of this world and the hereafter. [i]

3. Inward Luminosity

If religious commandments are acted on persistently and sincerely, they not only rectify the life of this world but also guarantee goodness of the soul and the hereafter. More importantly they give rise to an awareness of the soul's defects, luminosity of the heart's vision, deep insight about the realities of the self and the world, and the ability to differentiate truth from falsehood, and good from bad. All of these cannot be acquired by ordinary means; they are the result of observing sincerity in all one's actions, [ii] just as it is mentioned in the Qur'ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

O you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion for you [to distinguish between truth and falsehood]. (8:29)

4. Asceticism in the World and Attaining Wisdom

A person's heart is always torn between one of these two

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i. Ibid., no. 8255.

ii. Ibid., no. 3914.

عِنْدَ تَحَقُّقِ الْإِخْلَاصِ تَسْتَنِيرُ الْبَصَائِر

With the realization of sincerity, the insights are illuminated.

inclinations: either a strong desire for the world and its affairs, or an inclination towards the hereafter and spiritual affairs. The reality of asceticism (*zuhd*) is to decrease or cut off one's worldly attachments and bring about a strong desire and inclination towards the hereafter. A believer always strives to obey the commandments of Allah to give direction to their worldly attachments; they refrain from looking at the world and its affairs in an independent manner. The more and the deeper this obedience becomes, the more the heart attaches itself to the hereafter and to Allah's absolute perfection, and the less the desire towards worldly attachments shall be.

Sincerity in actions plays an important role in bringing about this asceticism. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says:

مَا أَخْلَصَ الْعَبْدُ الْإِيمَانَ بِاللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ ... إِلَّا زَهَّدَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ بَصَّرَهُ دَاءَهَا وَ دَوَاءَهَا فَأَثْبَتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فِي قَلْبِهِ وَ أَنْطَقَ بِهَا لِسَانَه

> A servant does not make their faith sincere for Allah the Invincible and Majestic ... except that Allah makes him an ascetic in the world, makes him aware of its ailments and their cure, makes wisdom firm in his heart and makes it flow on his tongue.[1]

Signs of Sincerity

For every being there are signs through which its existence can be confirmed. The good and bad states of a person are no exception to this rule. For the state of sincerity, certain signs have been mentioned in the traditions. A person who possesses these signs can rest assured that the state of sincerity exists in him. In general, these signs are as follows:

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 16, no. 16.

1. Well-Being of the Heart and Body Parts

The human has two types of well-being: the first is the well-being of the body from bodily illnesses, and the second is the spiritual well-being or well-being of the heart. As per a saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), one of the signs of a sincere person is the well-being of his heart and body parts.[i] The body parts of a person follow the heart in a spiritual sense. When the heart is attentive to Allah and wants to work for Him, it not only refrains from going against God's commandments in action, but also refrains from ethical vices like pride (*kibr*), jealousy (*ḥasad*), self-conceit (*'ujb*) and haughtiness (*ghurūr*). Therefore, such individuals remain sound and protected from the bodily illnesses that stem from these vices.

2. Doing Good to Others and Refraining from Doing Bad

Allah is the source of all goodness. An individual whose purpose in their actions is Allah, will undoubtedly work towards doing good to others and refraining from doing bad to them. This is because they know that whatever good emanates from him will never be lost, rather it remains.[ii] Thus, the messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) mentions two other signs of a sincere person as follows:

بَذْلَ خَيْرِهُ وَ كَفَّ شَرَّه

> He bestows his goodness on others and prevents his badness from reaching others.[iii]

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 21; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 1, p. 121.

وَ أَمَّا عَلَامَةُ الْمُخْلِصِ فَأَرْبَعَةٌ يَسْلَمُ قَلْبُهُ وَ يَسْلَمُ جَوَارِحُهُ ...

And as for the sign of the sincere person, they are four: his heart is sound, his body parts are sound...

ii. Qur'ān 16:96.

iii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 21; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 1, p. 121.

3. Not Being Preoccupied with Other than Allah

One who is intellectually mature and understands that all of this world—especially the human being with his astonishing complexity—is dependent on the eternal power and knowledge of Allah, and who also understands that the human is created for a higher purpose, is never distracted from the absolute beauty of Allah. The beauty and pleasure of other things do not distract them; they refrain from doing things which would preoccupy them with themselves. Even if such a person strives to acquire worldly possessions, it is only to carry out his responsibility of servitude. Acquiring the adornments of the world does not distract him from moving in the direction of Allah's servitude. Prophet Sulaymān and Prophet Yūsuf (peace be upon them) lived their lives in this way.[i]

Due to his lofty purpose and ambition, a sincere individual even refrains from hearing those things which make him negligent of Allah's remembrance. In fact, a sincere person is particularly vigilant of his eyes and ears so that whatever enters him from these two body parts do not prevent his heart from its main job which is to pay attention to Allah and the abode of the hereafter.

4. Not Becoming Saddened by Other's Possessions

When the human's eyes and ears are left uncontrolled, they not only indulge in the darkness of sin, but are also inclined towards worldliness when they see or are informed about the amount of wealth and possessions that others have. Moreover, they are constantly tempted to compete with others or even outdo them in terms of acquiring wealth and possessions. When they cannot, a state of sadness develops in their hearts with respect to the possessions of others. This state causes other vices to emerge such as being covetous of other's possessions or even jealousy towards them. However, the primary attention of a sincere person is not on the world and its affairs, and because of controlling his eyes and ears, he is not afflicted

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i. Qur'ān 38:35 and 12:55.

by these states.[i]

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 16, no. 3.

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَخْلَصَ لِلَّهِ الْعِبَادَةَ وَ الدُّعَاءَ وَ لَمْ يَشْغَلْ قَلْبَهُ بِمَا تَرَى عَيْنَاهُ وَ لَمْ يَنْسَ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ بِمَا تَسْمَعُ أُذُنَاهُ وَ لَمْ يَحْزُنْ صَدْرَهُ بِمَا أُعْطِيَ غَيْرُهُ.

Blessed is the one who dedicates his worship and supplication sincerely to Allah, does not engage his heart with that which his two eyes see, does not forget Allah's remembrance due to that which his two ears hear, and his heart is not grieved by that which others have been given.

2

THE RIGHT OF THE HUMAN'S SELF

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ نَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ فَأَنْ تَسْتَوْفِيَهَا فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ فَتُؤَدِّيَ إِلَى لِسَانِكَ حَقَّهُ وَ إِلَى سَمْعِكَ حَقَّهُ وَ إِلَى بَصَرِكَ حَقَّهُ وَ إِلَى يَدِكَ حَقَّهَا وَ إِلَى رِجْلِكَ حَقَّهَا وَ إِلَى بَطْنِكَ حَقَّهُ وَ إِلَى فَرْجِكَ حَقَّهُ وَ تَسْتَعِينَ بِاللَّهِ عَلَى ذَلِكَ

And the right of your own self on you is to employ it [completely] in [the servitude and] obedience of Allah. Thus [by doing this] you deliver to your tongue its right, to your hearing its right, to your sight its right, to your hand its right, to your leg its right, to your stomach its right, to your private parts their right. And you [must] seek help from God in that.[i]

THE NECESSITY OF RECOGNIZING THE HUMAN BEING

To whatever extent the human truly understands himself, he also develops an inclination and eagerness to know more about himself and act on this knowledge, thus allowing the realities of his existence to flourish. If the human ponders on himself and his inner states,

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 256.

and if he compares himself with other beings, he will appreciate the nobility of his existence. Contemplating on one's own existence in this manner delivers the human from darkness and guides him towards the luminous nature of his own reality and the other realities of the world. Allah has advised such contemplation by saying:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ وَفِي أَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

In the earth are signs for those who have conviction and, in your souls [as well]. Will you not then perceive?[i]

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) also says,

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ كَانَ بِغَيْرِ نَفْسِهِ أَعْرَف

One who knows his own self is more aware regarding other than himself.[ii]

The various schools of human thought have many differences of opinion regarding the reality of the human. Some of them define the human based on his physical actions and reactions while others based on chemical actions and reactions. Others have gone further and define the human based on psychological actions and reactions. But the best definition is that mentioned by the human's creator when He introduces the human as His own vicegerent (*khalīfah*).[iii] This means that the human is a being who has the capacity to acquire unlimited perfection. He can attain a station where he is worthy of being the vicegerent of Allah, manifesting His attributes of beauty (*jamāl*) and majesty (*jalāl*). Therefore, if we fall short in knowing the human's reality, our existence will be hindered from truly flourishing, and we shall be afflicted with irreparable damage.

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i. Qur'ān 51:20-21.

ii. al-Wāsitī, *'Uyūn al-ḥikam wa al-mawā'iẓ*, p. 438.

iii. Qur'ān 2:30.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HUMAN ACCORDING TO THE QUR'ān

The Human and Allah's Trust

One of the prerequisites for the station of Allah's vicegerency to emerge in the human is accepting the trust (*amānah*) that was entrusted to the human by Allah. What is meant by accepting this trust is that the human must completely accept the authority (*wilāyah*) of Allah. This means that he considers his existence and all its states, corollaries, and levels to be under the authority of Allah. Allah says the following regarding this acceptance:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنسَانُ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

> Indeed, We presented the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it and were apprehensive of it, but the human undertook it. Indeed, he is most unjust and ignorant [because he did not recognize the value of this great station and thus did injustice to himself]. (33:72)

Not accepting the trust of Allah by the heavens and the earth does not mean they disobeyed the commands of Allah, rather it means that they are incapable of bearing that Divine trust. As opposed to this, the human accepted the religion of God due to his primary innate nature, and this natural acceptance of religion is what makes the authority of God manifest itself in the human's soul. This acceptance is what paves the way for the human to become the vicegerent of God.

The Human: The Manifestation of Divine Beauty and Majesty

Even though God introduces all His creation as being good,[i] He mentions the human being's creation as being better than others:

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

> He created the heavens and the earth with truth, and He formed you and perfected your forms, and towards Him is your destination. (64:3)

Clearly, 'perfecting the forms of the human' does not refer to the human's face or his outward creation, rather, it refers to the reality and essence of the human's existence in which the spirit (*rūḥ*) of God has been blown. The human can become a manifestation of all God's attributes of beauty and majesty and need not be confined to a limited scope of Divine attributes. Hence, God praises Himself in the following way after creating the human:

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

So blessed is Allah, the best of creators! (23:14)

In the words of the poet Bābā Ṭāhir:

بود قدر تو افزون از ملائک
تو قدر خود نمی دانی چه حاصل

Your worth is greater than that of the angels,
[But alas! Since] you do not know your worth, what can be achieved?[ii]

Only when the human returns towards God with faith and righteous deeds can he actualize all the attributes of perfection in himself and attain the reality of his existence. Thus, God has mentioned

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i. Qur'ān 32:7.

ii. *Divān-i Bābā Ṭāhir*, p. 38.

returning to Him as the lofty purpose of the human's creation:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

O human being! You are labouring towards your Lord laboriously, and you will encounter Him. (84:6)

Those outside the limits of faith and righteous deeds are considered as losers in Qur'ān. They are either afflicted with unbelief (*kufr*), polytheism (*shirk*) or hypocrisy (*nifāq*) in their beliefs, or they are far removed from righteous actions and deeply attached to the material world and its affairs.[i] Therefore, one must contemplate and reflect on himself as to what the essence of his existence is?[ii]

Again, in the words of Bābā Ṭāhir:

تو که نخوانده ای علم سماوات تو که نابرده ای ره در خرابات
تو که سود و زیان خود ندانی به یاران کی رسی؟ هیهات هیهات

You who have not studied the knowledge of the heavens,[iii]
You who have not treaded the path in the taverns,[iv]
You who do not know your own profit and loss,
When will you join the friends?[v] *Far be it [from you], far be it [from you]!*[vi]

Is the reality and purpose of the human limited to his outward inclinations such as the inclination to satisfy his hunger, thirst, and lustful desires? Is he to direct all his intellectual abilities and attention towards these things and be like the horse in a horse mill, endlessly

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i. Qur'ān 103:1-3.

ii. Qur'ān 51:20-21.

iii. Knowledge of the heavens refers to the sciences of spirituality. The person being addressed in the poem has not learnt the theoretical knowledge of how to attain closeness to Allah. (Ed.)

iv. The tavern refers to the venue wherein people go to become intoxicated and is a symbol for the venue where a person's attention and love is towards the Almighty Lord. (Ed.)

v. Friends refers to the close servants of Allah. (Ed.)

vi. *Divān-i Bābā Ṭāhir*, 7.

turning around himself? Or are these affairs intended to be preliminaries for his true reality to flourish and to awaken him from the slumber of negligence?

The world is nothing but these transient inclinations towards wealth, power, lustful desires, and other affairs related to the material world. Considering these inclinations in an independent and immoderate manner while being negligent of the real Master of this world's affairs, causes debasement and foolishness,[i] or heedlessness for the human with regards to his own reality and that of Allah.[ii] The human is rescued from this foolishness and delusion when his attention and aspirations are not entirely focused on the acquisition of worldly goals, but rather, he employs them as tools for his hereafter. Such an individual contemplates and asks: where from and why have these inclinations been put into my existence? In this way, attention towards God is kindled in his heart and he attains a station where he does not consider Divine blessings to be from himself. As a result, he gives thanks to Allah and employs these blessings as commanded by Him, and in a manner that will take him to his Lord.[iii]

THE PATH TO THE HUMAN'S NOBILITY

Although Allah praises His creation of the world as being good, and although He also has lofty creations such as angels, He still uses a special expression to describe the human. He says:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

Certainly, We have honoured the Children of Adam, and carried them over land and sea, and provided them with all the good things, and preferred them with a complete

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i. Qur'ān 2:130.

ii. Qur'ān 59:19.

iii. Qur'ān 16:78.

preference over many of those We have created. (17:70)

Those who seek to embark upon the path towards human nobility should draw near to the examples of nobility and the true leaders, the most perfect of whom are the fourteen Infallibles (peace be upon them), and should follow them in order to be resurrected with them in the hereafter.[i] One who ignores his human nobility and does not obey these perfect examples of nobility will be—in the life of this world—blind to the realities of the world and to his own nobility. Moreover, in the hereafter too, he will be blind and even more deviated.[ii] Being blind towards the reality of one's own self causes one to be blind towards everything else. As Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ جَهِلَ نَفْسَهُ كَانَ بِغَيْرِ نَفْسِهِ أَجْهَل

One who is ignorant about his own self is even more ignorant about other than himself.[iii]

But if the human puts aside his excuses and truly embarks on the path of seeking reality, he becomes aware of his own self.[iv] And if he abides by the necessary outcomes of this awareness, then his awareness regarding himself and that which is good or bad for him increases. Over time, he acquires Divine guidance from within and he attains knowledge about his beginning and end, that is Allah.[v] In addition, he understands that he and the world around him are all limited and that even the perfections of his own existence are interwoven with defects and need. Ultimately, he realizes that he needs a self-sufficient and unlimited master and manager.

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i. Qur'ān 17:71.

ii. Qur'ān 17:72.

iii. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 233, no. 4663.

iv. Qur'ān 75:14-15.

v. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 233, no. 4654.

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَهُوَ لِغَيْرِهِ أَعْرَف

One who knows his own self is more aware regarding other than himself.

THE RIGHTS OF THE BODY PARTS

3

THE RIGHT OF THE TONGUE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ اللِّسَانِ فَإِكْرَامُهُ عَنِ الْخَنَا وَ تَعْوِيدُهُ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ وَ حَمْلُهُ عَلَى الْأَدَبِ وَ إِجْمَامُهُ إِلَّا لِمَوْضِعِ الْحَاجَةِ وَ الْمَنْفَعَةِ لِلدِّينِ وَ الدُّنْيَا وَ إِعْفَاؤُهُ عَنِ الْفُضُولِ الشَّنِيعَةِ الْقَلِيلَةِ الْفَائِدَةِ الَّتِي لَا يُؤْمَنُ ضَرَرُهَا مَعَ قِلَّةِ عَائِدَتِهَا وَ يُعَدُّ شَاهِدَ الْعَقْلِ وَ الدَّلِيلَ عَلَيْهِ وَ تَزَيُّنُ الْعَاقِلِ بِعَقْلِهِ حُسْنُ سِيرَتِهِ فِي لِسَانِهِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

And the right of the tongue is to consider it too noble for obscenity, accustom it to good, compel it to have etiquette, and hold it back except at the time of need or for religious and worldly benefits. And you should spare it from unnecessary ugly speech that has little benefit, for you are not protected from the loss and damage of such speech, while its gains are minute. And you should employ your tongue after the testimony and guidance of the intellect. The adornment of a wise person—due to the use of his intellect—lies in the beauty of his tongue's behaviour. And there is no strength except with Allah the

Exalted and All-Supreme.[i]

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RIGHT OF GOD, THE RIGHT OF THE SELF, AND THE RIGHTS OF THE BODY PARTS

The human is the most honourable being in the world of existence to whom God has granted many external and internal faculties. The five senses are granted to him for sensing material things and to fulfil his bodily needs. Various faculties of perception like the faculties of the intellect (*ʿaql*), imagination (*wahm*), memory (*ḥāfiẓah*) and contemplation (*mufakkirah*) are granted to him so that, by employing them, the human can attain the lofty pinnacles of human perfection. Therefore, the human must protect this creation of his and constantly watch over his external and internal faculties so that he is able to appropriately fulfil his responsibility and the Divine trust.[ii] For indeed, Allah has placed the potential of accepting this Divine trust in the human. By having such vigilance over his faculties, the human attains the station of God's *wilāyah*.

In fact, by accepting the right of God, the human has already theoretically accepted the need to sincerely serve Allah as well as His existential and legislative *rubūbiyyah*. Thereafter, he must manifest this acceptance through his actions by abiding by the different rights of his body parts on him. To abide by the rights of God with respect to one's body parts is a difficult task. However, with a lot of effort and by paying attention to this fact that the external actions of the human influence the formation of his inner self, one must observe these rights to the best of his abilities.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, pp. 256-257.

ii. Qurʾān 33:72.

THE RIGHT OF THE TONGUE: THE FIRST RIGHT OF THE BODY PARTS

The human can express his needs to others by using the blessing of his tongue. This blessing is of such importance that after mentioning the creation of the human, God mentions the blessing of speech:

الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

The All-beneficent has taught the Qur'ān. He created the human, [and] taught him articulate speech. (55:1-4)

Apart from making it possible for one to express his needs, the blessing of the tongue also introduces the human's identity and thoughts. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says in this regard:

تَكَلَّمُوا تُعْرَفُوا فَإِنَّ الْمَرْءَ مَخْبُوءٌ تَحْتَ لِسَانِه

Speak so that you are recognized, for verily a person is hidden behind his tongue.[1]

This means that the humanness and identity of a person is hidden, but when he speaks, he reveals his identity in the sense that how has it been formed or how does he wish to form it? In reality, a person's speech forms his identity and also exhibits the identity which has already taken form. A portion of the good attributes or ugly vices of the soul are manifested through the tongue. That's why from among the various body parts and practical activities of a person, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) first mentions the right of the tongue in his treatise.

In order to honour and protect the tongue, which is equivalent to honouring one's own self, three things must be done:

1) Refrain from negative and reprehensible speech
2) Habituate the tongue to righteous and good speech
3) Refrain from leaving the tongue uncontrolled

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying 392.

THE EFFECT OF THE TONGUE ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Even though the tongue is a very tiny body part, it can produce many positive and negative effects that influence the human's soul and society as well. The Infallibles (peace be upon them) have made profound statements regarding its various effects.

There is a tradition that states that a person went to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and requested him to advise him. In response, the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said the following three times: "Protect your tongue." Thereafter, he said:

هَلْ يَكُبُّ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ أَلْسِنَتِهِم

Does anything throw people on their nose [face] into the Hellfire, except what they earn through their tongues?[i]

Also, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّ لِسَانَ ابْنِ آدَمَ يُشْرِفُ عَلَى جَمِيعِ جَوَارِحِهِ كُلَّ صَبَاحٍ فَيَقُولُ كَيْفَ أَصْبَحْتُمْ فَيَقُولُونَ بِخَيْرٍ إِنْ تَرَكْتَنَا وَ يَقُولُونَ اللَّهَ اللَّهَ فِينَا وَ يُنَاشِدُونَهُ وَ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا نُثَابُ وَ نُعَاقَبُ بِكَ

Verily, the tongue of the son of Ādam looks down on all his body parts every morning and says to them, "In what state have you entered the morning?" They answer, "If you leave us alone, then in a good state." Then they say, "By God, by God, protect us!" They [continue to] implore him and say, "It is through you that we get rewarded and are punished."[ii]

This saying is referring to this fact that the tongue plays an effective role in deviating or reforming the actions of the human's other body parts, which results in deviating or reforming the person himself.

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 115, no. 14.

ii. Ibid., no. 13.

The tongue does not just create sound, but it also creates waves that enter the ears and souls of men, and the effect of this can remain for a long time. When inappropriate speech uttered by the tongue causes a bad tradition to emerge in society, then so long as that tradition remains, the adverse effects of it remain for the speaker, even in the realm of *barzakh*. On the other hand, if good speech is uttered by the tongue, then so long as others act on it, the speaker benefits from its positive effects. In the realm of barzakh, the positive effects of a person's speech are registered in his scroll of deeds.[i]

THE ROLE OF THE TONGUE IN SAFEGUARDING THE HEART'S FAITH

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) narrates from the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) that he said:

لَا يَسْتَقِيمُ إِيمَانُ عَبْدٍ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ قَلْبُهُ وَ لَا يَسْتَقِيمُ قَلْبُهُ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ لِسَانُه

> The faith of a servant does not become sound unless his heart becomes sound. And his heart does not become sound unless his tongue becomes sound.[ii]

Faith is the heart's belief regarding the unseen. In the initial levels of faith, the heart is not steadfast and is constantly in a state of upheaval.[iii] First, one must go through difficult tests at different

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i. Qur'ān 36:12.

ii. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon 176.

iii. What is intended by the heart here does not mean the physical heart made of flesh that resides in the left side of one's body. Rather, it means the reality and essence of a person, which commands and controls that heart made of flesh. It is this heart that is the commander, while the heart of flesh is the one who follows. The heart of flesh is constantly in the state of taking in and pumping out blood and is unstable. Hence, the same term is used for the reality of the human because it is also unstable in most people.

levels of belief and then at the level of one's actions. By succeeding in these successive tests, one's faith becomes firm. The most important body part that prepares the grounds for safeguarding the heart's faith in the domain of action, is the tongue. Unless the tongue gains balance and is controlled, the heart does not become steadfast. This is because the tongue is a special window into the heart. It brings things into the heart and also exhibits the products of the heart. Undoubtedly, controlling the tongue requires a lot of attention and precision because the tongue acts fast and without effort. It is generally very difficult to be observant and careful over those actions which are done effortlessly.

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَنْ رَأَى مَوْضِعَ كَلَامِهِ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ قَلَّ كَلَامُهُ إِلَّا فِيمَا يَعْنِيه

One who considers his speech as a part of his actions, his speech regarding that which does not benefit him becomes very little. [i]

مَنْ لَمْ يَحْسُبْ كَلَامَهُ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ كَثُرَتْ خَطَايَاهُ وَ حَضَرَ عَذَابُه

One who does not consider his speech as a part of his actions, his sins increase, and his punishment nears. [ii]

If a person considers the actions of his tongue as a part of his actions, then he would certainly take account of it. However, because speaking occurs very quickly and effortlessly, it is generally not considered to be an action just like other quick movements such as looking and blinking. These are all performed by a person without needing any thinking or preparing and without much time between the decision to perform them and their execution.

For this reason, being attentive to and observant of what one says is both difficult and valuable. Only an intelligent person can

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 116, no. 19.

ii. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 115, no. 15.

have such attentiveness, which causes his speech and actions to be in accordance with the intellect. Thus, it has been said:

لِسَانُ الْعَاقِلِ وَرَاءَ قَلْبِهِ وَ قَلْبُ الْأَحْمَقِ وَرَاءَ لِسَانِه

> The tongue of an intelligent person is behind his heart [intellect] and the heart [intellect] of a foolish person is behind his tongue.[1]

An intelligent person first thinks and then speaks while an ignorant person first speaks and then thinks.

THE SOUNDNESS OF THE HEART DEPENDS ON THE SOUNDNESS OF THE TONGUE

To protect the soul from inner impurities, one must be constantly vigilant over their tongue and carefully observe it. Such vigilance is in fact a battle with the self's desires and a means of saving it from misfortune. To observe the tongue, it is necessary to know its dangers and sins and then refrain from committing them. Similarly, it is necessary to know what good and righteous deeds can be performed by one's tongue and then adorn oneself with them. In this way, one can safeguard their soul from entering the path of misfortune and wretchedness.

OBLIGATIONS AND PRAISEWORTHY ACTIONS OF THE TONGUE

Some of the positive actions of the tongue are as follows:

1. Enjoining good and forbidding evil
2. Truthfulness when testifying in court
3. Showing the right way to an ignorant person
4. Fighting against and resisting innovations in religion (*bidʿah*)
5. Teaching beneficial knowledge
6. Reconciling people
7. Executing religious commitments (e.g., different types of

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying 40.

contracts)
8. Seeking forgiveness and repenting
9. Truthful legal confessions
10. Advising those who seek one's counsel
11. Constructive criticism
12. Passing judgment by speaking
13. Propagating the religion and verbally inviting people towards it
14. Verbally defending the truth and the oppressed
15. Taking an oath in court
16. Reciting religious *adhkār* (e.g., prayers, supplications, and the *talbiyah*)
17. Verbally solving people's problems
18. To be silent at the appropriate time
19. Verbally remembering the *awliyā'* of Allah (e.g., mentioning the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them), and performing *tawassul* to them
20. Presenting reasoning to prove the truth or achieve justice [i] [ii]
21. Cursing the enemies of religion and the enemies of the *awliyā'* of Allah

SINS AND UGLY ACTIONS OF THE TONGUE

The Qur'ān and the *sunnah* also mention many actions of the tongue as being sins or contrary to good *akhlāq*. Some of the undesirable actions of the tongue are as follows:
1. Ridiculing and mocking
2. Making claims which are out of place and against reality
3. Foul and harsh language
4. Expressing desires for others' possessions
5. Cursing believers

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i. Regarding this subject, independent and lengthy books have been compiled. Referring to them is extremely advisable.

ii. For example, the books of Sayyid Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī, 'Allāmah Sayyid Murtaḍā al-'Askarī, and the magnificent book *al-Ghadīr* of 'Allāmah 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī (may Allah have mercy upon them all). (Ed.)

6. Disclosing the secrets of a believer
7. Disclosing someone's defects in the presence of others
8. Insulting and offending believers
9. Scorning others
10. Disclosing one's own good deeds
11. Boasting to others regarding affairs of this world,[i] or the hereafter[ii]
12. Saying everything that one hears and knows
13. Using abusive language
14. Interrupting others when they are speaking
15. Disclosing one's own sins
16. False accusations
17. Vain and idle talk
18. Asking question for the sake of finding faults in others
19. Asking about others' secrets
20. Talking excessively
21. Apologizing when it is inappropriate to do so
22. Inappropriate flattery and praise of others
23. Speaking about women, girls and boys who are *non-maḥram*, and mentioning the qualities of their body, their attributes, and their attractive traits in the form of poetry
24. Spreading doubts and suspicions regarding the truth
25. Encouraging evil actions and falsehood
26. Reproaching a believer because of the difficulties he's going through or because he committed an offense
27. Interpreting God's words and those of His *awliyā'* according to one's own opinion
28. Conflict and dispute
29. Frightening believers and Muslims
30. Praising oneself without it being for the sake of any Godly or

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i. Such as one's position, the number of children or relatives they have, or how they are associated to a good family.

ii. Such as one's knowledge, worship, and service to others.

rational benefit

31. Betraying someone when advising them
32. Lying
33. Hypocrisy in speech
34. Begging from people
35. *Namīmah*[i]
36. *Najwā*[ii]
37. Spreading fitnah (discord) through speaking
38. Giving false or inappropriate testimony
39. Taunting and verbally expressing joy regarding others' difficulties
40. Inappropriate joking
41. Backbiting
42. Addressing others with obscene names
43. Singing
44. Obliging others and showing that one has done them a favour
45. Being verbally unthankful and ungrateful
46. Verbally assisting an oppressor

Some of these blameworthy actions will be explained in detail below.

1. Backbiting (Ghībah)

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) defines backbiting saying,

الْغِيبَةُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فِي أَخِيكَ مَا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْه

> Backbiting is to say about your brother in faith that which God has concealed.[iii]

As per this tradition, backbiting includes all kinds of hidden defects of an individual including bad deeds, bad attributes of the

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i. The author will discuss *namīmah* in detail shortly. (Ed.)

ii. *Najwā* refers to a secret conversation, such as individuals whispering to one another during a larger gathering. In the verse 4:114 Allah says, "There is no good in most of their *najwā* except in he who enjoins charity, or goodness, or reconciliation between people." (Ed.)

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 358, no. 7.

soul, defects of the body and even those defects which are not in the person himself but are in some way related to him like the defects of his child, problems pertaining to his wealth, or defects of his relatives.

The Prohibition of Backbiting

In the Noble Qur'ān, God prohibits believers from backbiting by saying:

وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ

> And some of you [believers] should not backbite others. Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. (49:12)

In this verse, after prohibiting backbiting, God states its reality and essence which is eating the flesh of one's dead brother. One who backbites, through this action, causes himself to move towards this quality of eating dead bodies which is an attribute of wild animals such as hyenas. The exterior and interior of one who backbites has been likened to such an animal because the outward form of backbiting is similar to killing and eating the dead, and the inward form of one who backbites is transformed into a non-human form and his identity and behaviour becomes like a hyena.

It is there in a tradition that:

الْغِيبَةُ أَسْرَعُ فِي دِينِ الرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ مِنَ الْأَكِلَةِ فِي جَوْفِه

> The effect of backbiting on the religion of a Muslim is faster than a worm that grows in his stomach [it annihilates his faith with more speed].[i]

The Inward Form of Backbiting

A human being's actions have two forms: *mulkī* (corporeal,

i. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 356, no. 1.

pertaining to this physical world) and *malakūtī* or *bāṭinī* (inward, pertaining to a higher realm).[i] Backbiting also has an inward form that the Infallibles (peace be upon them) would sometimes make apparent to reproach the one who backbites so that by seeing it, he may take heed and abandon this ugly and blameworthy action.

It is narrated from ʿĀ'ishah that:

> إِنِّي قُلْتُ لِامْرَأَةٍ وَ أَنَا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص إِنَّ هَذِهِ لَطَوِيلَةُ الذَّيْلِ فَقَالَ الْفِظِي الْفِظِي فَلَفَظْتُ بَضْعَةً مِنْ لَحْمٍ
>
> I was in the presence of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) when I said to a woman, "This [other] woman's clothing is long." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Bring it out of your mouth! Bring it out!" And then I vomited out a piece of flesh from my mouth.[ii]

This is the *malakūtī* form of backbiting. Apart from informing others about the reality of backbiting, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), because of having the station of existential authority (*al-wilāyah al-takwīniyyah*), influenced the existence of the person and showed the inward form of their action to them.

The Negative Effects of Backbiting

1. Prayer and Fasting not Being Accepted for Forty Days

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be

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i. The word *malakūt*, is a noun derived from the word *mulk* meaning kingdom, dominance, or authority. The former however contains a higher level of intensity, not present in the latter. In this context, it refers to an immaterial celestial realm wherein there are forms without matter. The authority of Allah and the relationship of action to Him is even clearer in that realm than it is in the material realm of the *mulk*. A higher and truer reality is manifested in that realm. (Ed.)

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmūʿah warrām*, vol. 1, p. 118.

upon him and his family) that he said:

مَنِ اغْتَابَ مُسْلِماً أَوْ مُسْلِمَةً لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ صَلَاتَهُ وَ لَا صِيَامَهُ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْماً وَ لَيْلَةً إِلَّا أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ.

One who backbites a Muslim man or woman, his prayer and fasting are not accepted for forty days and nights unless the one against whom the backbiting is done forgives him.[i]

2. Stench on the Day of Judgment

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَنِ اغْتَابَ ... وَ جَاءَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَفُوحُ مِنْهُ رَائِحَةٌ أَنْتَنُ مِنَ الْجِيفَةِ يَتَأَذَّى بِهِ أَهْلُ الْمَوْقِفِ فَإِنْ مَاتَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَتُوبَ مَاتَ مُسْتَحِلًّا لِمَا حَرَّمَ اللَّه

One who backbites [and does not repent] ... he will appear on the Day of Judgment while a stench worse than the smell of a corpse will come out from his mouth, due to which others will suffer. And if he dies before repenting, he will have died in a state of making permissible what Allah has prohibited [and his true human form will be lost].[ii]

This tradition also proves the inward form of backbiting. These inward forms manifest themselves on the Day of Judgment.

The Incentives Behind Backbiting

Normally sins arise from blameworthy attributes of the soul. By refraining from sinning, these blameworthy attributes are also gradually eliminated. Being attentive to the roots from which sins stem is

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 258, no. 53.

ii. Ibid., vol. 75, p. 247, no. 10.

difficult in the beginning but through controlling one's actions, this attentiveness is gradually acquired. With this, a person can seek to eliminate these undesirable traits, especially considering how these vices play a significant role in decreasing one's faith.

1. Enmity and Hatred

Hatred and enmity towards others are some of the key motives that lead a person to backbite. Hatred is one of the vices which must not be present between believers. And if it exists within them inwardly, it must not be shown and manifested in action, because until it is shown and acted on it is not something prohibited by the *sharī'ah*. However, when manifested through backbiting, scheming, deceit, or other such actions, then it is something prohibited by the *sharī'ah* and the one who commits these deeds shall receive its due punishment.

2. Envy

An envious person has a fire within him which he sometimes manifests by backbiting others. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَدَ يَأْكُلُ الْإِيمَانَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ النَّارُ الْحَطَبَ

Envy devours faith just like fire devours firewood.[i]

When an envious person cannot tolerate seeing a blessing or a good situation in someone, the fire inside him is kindled and manifests itself in his body parts, especially on his tongue. He thinks that by backbiting, this person shall lose his reputation, or his blessing will go away.

Carefully observing the incentive behind envious actions, indicates that these are satanic insinuations (*waswasah*). Shayṭān was the first one to manifest his envy. To make Prophet Ādam (peace be upon him) look worthless before God, he presented that which, in his own opinion, was a defect of Prophet Ādam and said:

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 306, no. 2.

خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ
You created me from fire and him from clay.[i]

Even though, in the end, he yielded no benefit from mentioning Prophet Ādam's defect, and due to his disobedience of Allah's command, he was expelled from that abode.

3. Anger

Sometimes when a person is furious at someone else, to appease this anger, he exposes their faults in front of others. In reality, anger is the indicator of the flames of fire that burn inside a person and manifest themselves in his external faculties. These flames undoubtedly influence the person's soul. In the words of the Noble Qur'an, the soul of the human being slowly turns into the fuel of the Hellfire.[ii] As to how it is that a human—who is from clay—can become fuel for the fire of Hell, this is a question whose answer must be sought in the firm system of the world. We are unaware of the reality of many such relationships in this world.

4. Joking and Making Others Laugh

Sometimes people sit together and spend their time in amusement, leisure and mentioning the defects of others to make each other laugh. They imagine that in this way, they are enjoying a happy time together. Of course, making jokes to some extent is desirable and the Imams (peace be upon them) have also recommend this. However, making jokes and making others laugh is desirable only when it is not mixed with prohibited and futile actions.

5. To Ridicule and Scorn Others

Causing others to laugh and enjoy by ridiculing a person or a particular group and by saying something which humiliates them,

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i. Qur'ān 7:12.

ii. Qur'ān 2:24.

is a great sin which has been extremely reproached and brings about undesirable effects. If this is done through backbiting it is even worse, and its evil effects on the soul are stronger.

6. Taking Pride in and Boasting About One's Own Perfections

Boasting to others is something which is always blameworthy and as per the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, is a trait of the people of the world. The master of the pious 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

أَهْلَكَ النَّاسَ اثْنَانِ خَوْفُ الْفَقْرِ وَ طَلَبُ الْفَخْرِ

> Two things destroy a person: fear of poverty and seeking pride.[i]

Having pride and boasting about oneself is even blameworthy with respect to real and spiritual matters like knowledge and worship. This is because both knowledge and worship can be lost, something can occur that erases them. If a person wants to display his own impermanent and dependent perfections by mentioning the defects of others, then he has performed a very blameworthy and despicable action.

7. Defending Oneself

Sometimes something undesirable is attributed to a person and, to repel this and defend himself, he attributes it to someone else who truly has this defect, but others are unaware of it. In doing so, he mentions their defects and backbites. Even though defending one's own dignity is necessary, it should not be done by mentioning the defects of others because this is one of the methods of Shaytān's infiltration.

8. Having a Partner in Crime

Sometimes, to make someone else his partner in an undesirable act and make his own crime look less bad, a person reveals another

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 215.

person's hidden defects and says, "So-and-so has also performed this act!"

9. Showing Anger Towards Sin

It is possible that someone sins in a hidden way, and then another person tells others about that sinner to show their anger and annoyance towards his sin. We must recognize that even though showing anger towards sins is desirable, this only applies to those sins that are performed publicly. For example, Abū Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) used to openly display his anger towards the crimes and injustices of the unjust rulers and it was for this that he was exiled. However, God has not given us the right to reveal the hidden sins of others even for the purpose of admonishing them or forbidding evil. Therefore, when encountering hidden sins or hidden defects, it is not desirable to mention them even for the purpose of showing anger towards those sins, rather this is itself a great sin.

Some Exceptions to Backbiting and their Reasons

In certain circumstances, mentioning some of the hidden defects or hidden affairs of others has been allowed. These are exceptions to the prohibited backbiting. Most of these situations have been made to be an exception so that believers are not deviated and do not take the wrong path. In such instances—wherein backbiting becomes desirable or even obligatory—the speaker as well as the listener of the backbiting benefit and receive positive effects. Some of the instances where backbiting becomes permissible or obligatory are as follows:

1. Seeking Justice

When a person is incapable of warding off oppression from himself, he can complain about it to someone else who he thinks can stop this oppression. In this situation, the person is only allowed to reveal the defect of the oppressor that pertains to the oppression he is facing.

2. Manifest Sins, Transgression and Defects

Backbiting a transgressor regarding those specific sins that he performs openly and does not care about them becoming public, is permissible. Similarly, mentioning those defects which are known to people is permissible as well.

3. Guiding Believers

Whenever a believer wants to develop a friendly relationship with someone whose transgressions he is unaware of, and this friendly relationship will result in his deviation and impurity, in such situations one can mention the defects of that transgressor for the purpose of guiding the believer and preventing him from that relationship. However, it is important to note that in such situations, it is only permissible to mention those defects that are related to that friendly relationship; it is not permissible to mention all the individual's defects.

4. Advising Those Who Seek Advice

If advice is sought from someone regarding their opinion of a person, he can mention the hidden defects of that person to the extent appropriate for the needs of the one seeking advice. For example, if one wants to be partners with a person while that person is not trustworthy, then the advising person can mention this defect. However, if the seeker of advice would be convinced by something general like, "this partnership is not appropriate for you", then naturally there is no need to mention any personal defects, such a general statement is sufficient.

5. Revealing the Defects of a Witness

To mention the defects of a witness who is a transgressor and whose testimony is going to result in injustice, is permissible. Likewise, it is permissible to mention the defects of those narrators or reporters who narrate partially or narrate things that are contrary to what they have really heard or seen.

6. Mentioning the Views of the Deviated and the Innovators

Mentioning the views of those who cause innovation (*bidʿah*) in the religion and those who are deviated, so that people may recognize them and not be influenced by their views, is not only desirable but can be obligatory at times. Similarly, it is permissible and may even be obligatory to backbite those whose hidden actions bring about adverse social or political effects, when those adverse effects can be prevented in this way. The unbelievers, those who are not lovers of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and unknown people also fall under this category.

7. Forbidding Evil

When someone's defect is a matter related to the *sharīʿah* such as drinking alcohol or not praying, and the person who mentions this defect sees a reasonable possibility that revealing the defect will cause the sinner to perform that which is obligatory or refrain from that which is forbidden, then it is permissible to reveal those defects with the intention of enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amr bi al-maʿrūf wa nahy ʿan al-munkar*). In fact, it is obligatory on him to do so.

Factors that Prevent Backbiting

1. Attentiveness to the Punishments of Backbiting

Unfortunately, backbiting is one of those sins that is not considered very reprehensible in society even though, as per the saying of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), backbiting is worse than *zinā*.[i],[ii] This is while *zinā* is an extremely

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i. *Zinā* is one of the greater sins in Islam and refers to the act of conjugal relations between a man and woman who are not married. It therefore encompasses the English words adultery and fornication. (Ed.)

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 74, p. 89.

الْغِيبَةَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزِّنَا

sinful act and even those who do not have faith recognize its evilness. Therefore, through this saying, the Prophet further illustrates how heinous backbiting is by comparing it with *zinā*.

It is possible that backbiting results in other corruption appearing in society. If so, the one who backbit is a partner in this corruption, and those evil actions are also written in his scroll of deeds. For example, a person who never committed murder during his lifetime may find that murder is written on his scroll of deeds on the Day of Judgment because he said something which caused hatred and enmity between people as a result of which a fight and murder took place between them. Because the speaker was a cause of this murder, it is written in his scroll of deeds.

2. Paying Attention to the Blameworthiness of Backbiting

Performing forbidden and undesirable actions usually arises from the weakness of the human soul. However, paying attention to the bad effects of these actions and not performing them strengthens one's relationship with Allah and human society. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

الْغِيبَةُ جُهْدُ الْعَاجِزِ

Backbiting is the effort of an incapable person.[i]

One who lacks self-confidence is weak and incapable, and by backbiting others he seeks to portray himself as being bigger. Being attentive to this fact brings about an internal power of control and a barrier in a person's soul that prevents him from backbiting and makes him want to distance himself from it.

3. Paying Attention to the Reactions Caused by Backbiting

If the one who backbites pays attention to this fact that just like himself, others can also backbite him and reveal his hidden defects, then a sense of honour is created within him which results in him

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 57, no. 1115.

leaving aside backbiting.

2. Lying (Kidhb)

Lying is to mention things that are contrary to reality. This action is against the benefits of the people, and by means of his lie, a liar directs society towards something contrary to reality. Similarly, he causes himself to move in a direction contrary to those true perfections for which he was created. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says the following in condemnation of lying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ جَعَلَ لِلشَّرِّ أَقْفَالًا وَ جَعَلَ مَفَاتِيحَ تِلْكَ الْأَقْفَالِ الشَّرَابَ وَ الْكَذِبُ شَرٌّ مِنَ الشَّرَابِ

> Verily Allah the Glorious and Majestic has put locks on evil and has made alcohol their keys. But lying is even worse than alcohol.[i]

Therefore, lying in and of itself has bad effects irrespective of the contents of the lie. Even if a person lies without serious intention, just to entertain or to make someone laugh, it still has a bad effect on the liar. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

لَا يَجِدُ عَبْدٌ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَ الْكَذِبَ هَزْلَهُ وَ جِدَّه

> A servant does not enjoy in the taste of faith unless he abandons lying, be it out of jest or seriously.[ii]

Faith has a taste which the human soul experiences directly. A person who lies has deprived himself of the pleasures related to faith and should not expect that he will act based on his faith. It is for this reason that so many verses of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* reprimand lying.

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 338, no. 3.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 216.

The Background and Cause of Lying

1. A Weak Personality

Sins generally arise from a particular psychological cause. Sometimes such causes are present in a weak form in children, because of which a child is afflicted with vices. By deep analysis, it is possible to find these origins and eliminate the background that leads to sin. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says the following regarding the psychological background of lying:

لَا يَكْذِبُ الْكَاذِبُ إِلَّا مِنْ مَهَانَةِ نَفْسِه

A liar does not lie except due to feeling inferior.[i]

Having an inferiority complex or making someone else feel inferior leads to lying. For this reason, in the early stages of childhood, when children have not yet attained intellectual maturity, their positive traits should be highlighted. Children should be brought up in a way that they feel big and honourable, so that they refrain from performing undesirable actions. In the same way that lying originates from a weakness of personality, relying on and being assured by a liar is also one of the origins of weakness in a person. A person becomes an object of mockery because of this reliance.

أَصْلُ السُّخْرِيَّةِ الطُّمَأْنِينَةُ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْكَذِب

The root of mockery is reliance on and being assured by liars.[ii]

2. A Deficient Intellect

Imam al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّ الْعَاقِلَ لَا يَكْذِبُ وَ إِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ هَوَاه

i. al-Mufid, *Al-ikhtiṣāṣ*, p. 232.

ii. Ibid.

> An intellectual person does not lie even when he is inclined towards it. [1]

Undoubtedly, lying has imaginary benefits and Shayṭān presents these as being real to a liar, to make him fall into his trap. Lying does away with the intellect (*'aql*) and hinders one from comprehending the realities of the world, and the realities related to oneself and others. Thus, the only result is the growth of a person's faculty of imagination (*al-quwwah al-khiyāliyyah*). This can continue to such an extent that an individual starts considering such false growth to be real. He considers imaginative pleasures to be real, becomes inclined towards them and thus, goes after them.

Different Types of Lying

1. Lying About God and His Awliyā'

The most heinous instance of lying is when a person, intentionally and knowingly, ascribes something falsely to Allah and His *awliyā'*. This means that a person, with knowledge and awareness, presents the reality of religion contrary to what it is. He portrays that which is not the commandment of God and His messenger, as being from them. Such a person, if he does not repent, has ensured the destruction of his own faith. The Noble Qur'ān says the following in this regard:

> فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا لِّيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
>
> So, who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah to mislead the people without any knowledge? (6:144)

This act is performed for two different goals. Firstly, for the intentional purpose of deviating people. Secondly, when someone has themselves reached an understanding without deeply investigating the Islamic sciences, and then they attribute this to the religion. The Noble Messenger of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 19.

family) stood against such people and said:

إِذَا ظَهَرَتِ الْبِدَعُ فِي أُمَّتِي فَلْيُظْهِرِ الْعَالِمُ عِلْمَه

When innovations appear in my *ummah*, it is necessary for the learned to reveal his knowledge. (i)

Thus, religious scholars must expose the lies of such individuals because they cause many people to deviate. From this discussion it also becomes clear that an innovation in religion is when something is falsely ascribed to God.

2. Taking a False Oath

A false oath means that a person swears by Allah, or by one of His names and attributes, or by His *awliyā'* in front of a judge or others. He would do so for the purpose of invalidating the truth, asserting falsehood, denying the rights of a believer, or asserting an invalid matter for himself. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ حَلَفَ عَلَى يَمِينٍ وَ هُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ كَاذِبٌ فَقَدْ بَارَزَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَل

One who takes an oath while he knows it is false, has certainly declared war against the Glorious and Majestic God. (ii)

3. Bearing False Witness

One of the social responsibilities of a person is to bear witness for the purpose of asserting the truth and disclosing the reality. A witness who manifests the truth and saves an oppressed individual gains abundant reward from the Allah the All-Merciful. On the other hand, bearing false witness, which is far worse than concealing one's testimony, is a greater sin and causes a person to lose the status of being *'ādil* (just). One who—in front of people or in court—wants

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 54, no. 2.

ii. Ibid., vol. 7, p. 435, no. 1.

to spoil someone's right or assert something falsely for himself, shall face punishment and reproach in the hereafter.[i] In this world too, not only will his dignity be lost, and his honour spoiled, but he will also have to compensate for the rights or money that were lost by their rightful owner due to his false witness.

Effects of Lying

1. Weakening of Faith

Like other sins, the first effect which lying has on one's soul is that it weakens and destroys faith.[ii] Until a person does not repent from his sinful behaviour, the faith that he claims by his tongue is incomplete and pending, because real faith is spread over all the body parts and due to lying, the faith related to the tongue is weakened. If the person continues lying, the faith of his other body parts will also gradually weaken and eventually be destroyed from its roots and in the end, the faith of the heart will also be eliminated. That's why the Noble Qur'ān warns us as follows:

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا السُّوأَىٰ أَن كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ

Then the fate of those who committed misdeeds was that they denied the signs of Allah. (30:10)

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i. al-Maghribī, *Da'ā'im al-islām*, vol. 2, p. 508.

وَ عَنْ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ ع أَنَّهُ قَالَ: شَاهِدُ الزُّورِ لَا تَزُولُ قَدَمَاهُ يَعْنِي مِنْ مَوْضِعِ شَهَادَتِهِ حَتَّى تَجِبَ لَهُ النَّارُ

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) has said, "The one who witnesses falsely does not remove his feet—meaning from the place where he gave witness—until the Fire is made incumbent on him."

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 339, no. 4.

إِنَّ الْكَذِبَ هُوَ خَرَابُ الْإِيمَانِ

Lying destroys faith.

2. Blackening of One's Face

As per the saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), the real face of a liar is black,[i] because he portrays things as being black for others. Even though the outward face of the liar in this world is normal like others, on the Day of Judgment his blackened inward face shall be revealed to all.

3. Decrease in Sustenance

The sustenance (*rizq*) of a human being is of two types, certain and uncertain. Attaining the uncertain sustenance is in our control, and it is attained through our own work. Some of a person's attributes are influential in its decrease or increase. One such attribute is the habit of lying. As per the saying of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, 'Ali (peace be upon him), the habit of lying brings about poverty,[ii] because as a result of lying, people's trust for that person is lost and his social interactions decrease, causing a decrease in income and sustenance.

4. Growth of Hypocrisy

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

الْكَذِبُ بَابٌ مِنْ أَبْوَابِ النِّفَاق

Lying is a door from the doors of hypocrisy (*nifāq*).[iii]

Lying leads a person towards hypocrisy. It is also narrated from the Prophet that he said:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 14.

إِيَّاكَ وَ الْكَذِبَ فَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يُسَوِّدُ الْوَجْه

Refrain from lying because lying blackens the face of the liar.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 69, p. 261, no. 36.

اعْتِيَادُ الْكَذِبِ يُورِثُ الْفَقْر

Being habituated to lying causes poverty.

iii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 1, p. 113.

كُلُّ خَصْلَةٍ يُطْبَعُ أَوْ يُطْوَى عَلَيْهَا الْمُؤْمِنُ إِلَّا الْخِيَانَةَ وَ الْكَذِبَ

A believer can get accustomed to any attribute, or any attribute can be present within him, except betrayal and lying.[i]

5. Loss of Chivalry

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

وَ أَقَلُّ النَّاسِ مُرُوَّةً مَنْ كَانَ كَاذِبًا

The least chivalrous of all is he who is a liar.[ii]

A chivalrous person always adorns himself with good ethical attributes and desirable habits until he attains real perfection. He also wants others to attain that perfection and be connected with realities. Undoubtedly, such a state is incompatible with lying.

6. Forgetfulness

Forgetfulness is the product of a psychological reaction that takes place in the cognitive faculties of a person for different reasons, one of which is the habit of lying. However, it is not true that anyone who is forgetful is a liar! Rather the reverse of that is true. As per the renowned proverb that says, "the liar is forgetful", the effect of lying is forgetfulness. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّ مِمَّا أَعَانَ اللَّهُ بِهِ عَلَى الْكَذَّابِينَ النِّسْيَانَ

One of the things with which Allah helps [others] against liars is forgetfulness.[iii]

A liar wants to portray truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth. Thus, whenever a liar wants to harm the believers in this way, God reveals his plan to others by afflicting him with forgetfulness.

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i. Ibid, p. 114.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 74, p. 112.

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 341, no. 15.

The Malakūtī Face of Lying

The human being's actions have two faces: *mulkī* and *malakūtī*. It is possible that these two forms may become apparent for the person himself and for others. The inner reality, or the *malakūtī* form of lying, is a bad smell that comes out of the liar's mouth. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says the following regarding the *malakūtī* form of lying:

الْمُؤْمِنُ إِذَا كَذَبَ بِغَيْرِ عُذْرٍ لَعَنَهُ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ وَ خَرَجَ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ نَتْنٌ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْعَرْشَ فَيَلْعَنُهُ حَمَلَةُ الْعَرْشِ

> Whenever a believer lies without any excuse, seventy thousand angels curse him, and a stench comes out from his heart which reaches the Throne (*'arsh*) and then the Bearers of the Throne curse him.[i]

How to Stay Away from Lying

To stay away from lying, one must pay attention to its many undesirable effects, including material, spiritual, individual, and social effects. In addition, one must be attentive to this point that they should not say everything they hear because much of what is heard is not true and by saying those things, they will definitely fall into lying. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

حَسْبُكَ مِنَ الْكَذِبِ أَنْ تُحَدِّثَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعْت

> For being counted amongst the liars, it is enough to say everything you hear.[ii]

Some Exceptions to the Prohibited Lying

Some instances of lying—due to their benefits—are exceptions to the prohibition of lying, in the same way that some instances of

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i. al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, vol. 9, p. 86.

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 2, p. 122.

truthfulness are not permissible due to the bad effects that they bring about. Speaking the truth and honesty is so that a person reaches the truth. Now if saying the truth causes others or the truthful speaker himself to fall into corruption, naturally, saying this is not right. Some of the exceptions to the prohibition of lying are as follows:

1. Warding Off Oppression from Oneself and Others

If repelling oppression requires lying, then there is no problem in lying. This is because oppression is something despicable and it darkens the existence of a person. Hence, it is desirable to ward it off and save others from it. Although lying for the purpose of warding off oppression is apparently against the reality, it brings about desirable effects in a person's soul.

2. Rectifying People's Relations

When there is tension between believers, there is no problem in lying to amend the relationship between them. For example, saying to one of them that the other has commended and praised you, and vice versa, so that the hostility between them is eliminated and love and friendship is established. Although the essence of lying is to create discord, but because here it causes unity, in the holy *sharī'ah*, such lying is considered permissible. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ أَحَبَّ الْكَذِبَ فِي الصَّلَاحِ وَ أَبْغَضَ الصِّدْقَ فِي الْفَسَادِ

> Verily Allah, the Glorious and Majestic, loves the lying that is for creating good and hates the truthfulness that is for creating corruption.[i]

3. Promising One's Wife and Children due to Religious Rationale

To prevent hostility and tension between a husband and wife, it

i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 353.

has been permitted that a a person can sometimes—when there is a religious rationale in doing so—promise something to his wife even though his intention is to not act on that promise. However, the permissibility of making a false promise is only in those situations where he has no ability to fulfil the promise and speaking the truth will cause discord or a fight. He is not allowed to give false promises all the time!

4. To Gain Victory over the Enemy During War

Lying during war against the enemy, when it is in the good interests of religion, is permissible. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), during the Battle of Khandaq, said the following about battle tactics:

الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَة

The war is deception

And for the purpose of creating discord between the hypocrites and the Jews who had joined hands against Islam, a **statement** from him addressing the Jews was circulated that the hypocrites have broken their oath. Then he said:

تَكَلَّمُوا بِمَا أَرَدْتُم

> Speak that which you wish [that which you find to be in the bests interest, to conquer the enemy].[i]

5. Taqīyyah

In a situation where the life, wealth, or dignity of an individual or the Islamic *ummah* is in danger due to the correct religious beliefs and actions they are following, concealing the correct religious path is allowed and lying to conceal one's beliefs is permissible. However, this is only the case when allowing these matters of life, wealth, or dignity to fall into danger has no significant desirable outcome,

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i. al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, vol. 6, p. 163.

rather it will only result in the death of believers and the victory of the enemy.

It is necessary that the cases where *taqiyyah* should be applied are carefully considered. Sometimes, even in an Islamic state like Iran whose rulership is Shī'ah, not observing *taqiyyah* in some actions results in the enemies taking advantage of this. As a result, they consider spilling the blood of their Shī'ah brothers to be permissible, and they murder them.

3. Namīmah

Namīmah means that a person hears something from an individual and tells it to someone else such that it causes separation or the severing of a friendly relationship between those individuals, or results in the disclosing of a person's secrets against his own desire.

Social Effects of Namīmah

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said while addressing his companions:

أَ لَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِشِرَارِكُم

Should I inform you as to who are the worst among you?

They said, "Yes, O Messenger of God!" He said:

الْمَشَّاءُونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ الْمُفَرِّقُونَ بَيْنَ الْأَحِبَّةِ الْبَاغُونَ لِلْبُرَاءِ الْعَيْبَ

Those who [in the society] take steps towards *namīmah*, create discord among friends, and oppress those people who have no fault.[i]

The performer of *namīmah* indulges in it to gain worldly benefits for himself or so that someone else who has gained benefits, loses them. Sometimes people do not take the benefits of *namīmah* into account, but because their souls have developed a fondness and

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i. al-Huwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, vol. 5, p. 393; al-Tabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 445.

attachment to evil, they become happy with instigating a fight and dispute among believers and creating hostility among them.

In a tradition, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) mentions the social effects of *namīmah* as follows:

إِنَّ مِنْ أَكْبَرِ السِّحْرِ النَّمِيمَةَ يُفَرَّقُ بِهَا بَيْنَ الْمُتَحَابَّيْنِ وَ يُجْلَبُ الْعَدَاوَةُ عَلَى الْمُتَصَافِيَيْنِ وَ يُسْفَكُ بِهَا الدِّمَاءُ وَ يُهْدَمُ بِهَا الدُّورُ وَ يُكْشَفُ بِهَا السُّتُورُ...

> Verily, *namīmah* is among the greatest of magic. Through *namīmah*, separation is created among friends, and it makes united friends to be enemies of each other. Through it, blood is spilt, houses are ruined, and veils are torn apart...[i]

Perhaps the reason why the Imam considers *namīmah* as the greatest of magic is that learning magic is difficult and requires strict ascetic activities to bring disbelieving jinn under one's control. But the act of *namīmah* does not require those efforts and can be done very easily. In places where socio-cultural standards are lower, the effects of this act are more. This is because people do not investigate the correctness or incorrectness of what is said and start acting on it immediately. It is even possible that because of this action, people may be killed.

Effects of Namīmah on the Individual

In addition to the social effects, *namīmah* also has effects on the individual. In the first case, it shows the inner impurity of the one who does *namīmah*. Secondly, the negative social effects also return to the person himself. If he does not repent, these effects will afflict him. Imam al-Jawād (peace be upon him) narrates from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) that he said:

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 60, p. 21.

لَيْلَةَ أُسْرِيَ بِي إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ... وَ رَأَيْتُ امْرَأَةً رَأْسُهَا رَأْسُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَ بَدَنُهَا بَدَنُ الْحِمَارِ وَ عَلَيْهَا أَلْفُ أَلْفِ لَوْنٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ... فَقَالَتْ فَاطِمَةُ ع حَبِيبِي وَ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي أَخْبِرْنِي مَا كَانَ عَمَلُهُنَّ وَ سِيرَتُهُنَّ حَتَّى وَضَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِنَّ هَذَا الْعَذَابَ فَقَالَ يَا بُنَيَّتِي ... فَإِنَّهَا كَانَتْ نَمَّامَةً كَذَّابَةً

"On the night that I went for *miʿrāj* ... I saw a woman whose head was like the head of a pig and her body was like the body of a donkey and she was undergoing a million types of punishments." ... Fāṭimah (peace be upon her) asked, "Oh! my beloved [father] and the delight of my eye! Inform me what did these women do such that Allah punished them with this punishment?" He said, "O my beloved daughter ... she was one who performed *namīmah* and was a liar."[i]

This shows the inward reality of *namīmah*. The one who performs *namīmah*, apart from the chastisement that awaits him in the hereafter, is also afflicted with the results of his bad action in this world.

The Responsibility of the Islamic Society Regarding Namīmah

1. Investigation

The Noble Qur'ān has clarified one's responsibility regarding one who performs *namīmah* as follows:

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّاءٍ بِنَمِيمٍ

And do not obey any vile swearer, scandalmonger, who takes steps to perform *namīmah*. (68:10-11)

Some people, due to the purity of their inner selves, consider everything said by others as true and accept their oaths. Prophet Ādam (peace be upon him) also believed that which Shaytān said to him:

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (peace be upon him), vol. 2, p. 10.

إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ

I am indeed your well-wisher. (7:21)

Man's responsibility when encountering others' words is to investigate them with insight and awareness. We shouldn't be such that we listen to everyone's words and act according to what we hear, but we should also not be such that we don't accept anybody's words.

2. Forbidding Evil

Namīmah is one of the evils performed by the tongue. Because it causes a lot of corruption, it is extremely important to forbid it. If someone acts according to the information received by way of *namīmah* and does not perform his duty of forbidding it (*nahy ʿan al-munkar*), or if he considers this information to be true and is pleased with it, then he himself will be afflicted with the natural outcome of this act. This natural outcome is that others will in turn perform *namīmah* against him. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says the following in this regard:

مَنْ نَمَّ إِلَيْكَ سَيَنُمُّ عَلَيْكَ

A person who brought *namīmah* [against others] to you, will soon bring *namīmah* against you [to others].[i]

4. Slander and False Accusation

The Noble Qur'ān warns believers in many places against slandering others (*buhtān*). It brings about negative effects both socially and for the faith of the individual. Allah says:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا

Those who offend faithful men and women undeservedly, certainly bear the guilt of slander and flagrant sin. (33:58)

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 316.

To slander means that a person, knowingly and intentionally, just because of a suspicion about somebody, falsely attributes an action to him or ascribes a defect or fault to him. In fact, such a person commits two greater sins: lying and oppression, although all sins are a kind of oppression. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

الْبُهْتَانُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فِيهِ مَا لَيْسَ فِيهِ

> Slander is that you attribute to him [a believer] that which is not in him.[1]

Effects of Slander

Slander has negative social as well as individual effects, as follows:

A. Individual Effects

To discourage this ugly action, the Noble Qur'ān has an astonishing expression:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

> Indeed, those who want indecency to spread among the faithful—there is a painful punishment for them in the world and the Hereafter. (24:19)

If someone is inclined towards slander and if this is not controlled, it reaches such a stage that Shayṭān adorns this action in his eyes, hides its negative effects, and the person even finds the act to be pleasing. If this continues, his faith is eliminated and so long as he does not put an end to the slander, faith will not manifest in him. This lack of faith is the most complete punishment in the world. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says the following in this regard:

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 358, no. 7.

إِذَا اتَّهَمَ الْمُؤْمِنُ أَخَاهُ انْمَاثَ الْإِيمَانُ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ كَمَا يَنْمَاثُ الْمِلْحُ فِي الْمَاءِ

> When a person accuses a believer, faith dissolves in his heart just as salt dissolves in water. [i]

If this undesirable effect of slander is not rectified, it also manifests itself on the Day of Judgment and brings about a very painful chastisement in the Hereafter. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

مَنْ بَهَتَ مُؤْمِناً أَوْ مُؤْمِنَةً ... أَقَامَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَى تَلٍّ مِنْ نَارٍ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ مِمَّا قَالَهُ فِيهِ

> One who slanders a believing man or woman ... on the Day of Judgment Allah will put him on a hill of fire until he comes out of what he said regarding them. [ii]

B. Social Effects

If slander takes place in society and an appropriate reaction is not taken against the slanderer, that is if the 'forbidding of evil' (*nahy 'an al-munkar*) is not performed and instead his accusations are considered true and promoted, then this will produce negative effects in society. Some of these negative effects are:

1. The system and order of society unravels, security is lost, and a constant state of worry prevails over the people. Islam wants believers to have a sense of tranquillity of faith, thus one must not act according to the words of slanderers until they are proven with certainty. Even after gaining certainty about these accusations, one must not disclose them. Believers, in addition to having pure souls and good opinions about others, must also be wise and know the methods of encountering others to be safe from the negative effects of their sins.

2. The truth is portrayed as falsehood in society, and non-reality

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i. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 361, no. 1.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (peace be upon him), vol. 2, p. 33, no. 63.

is considered to be the reality. The weapon of the prophets' (peace be upon them) enemies was that they used to accuse them of being magicians, liars, insane, and so on, to push them out of the social arena and conceal the truth by means of such slander. Believers must not use such a weapon against one another.

3. The Innocent are Convicted while the Guilty are Acquitted

In the war of Banī Mustalaq, one of the wives of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) accompanied him and was riding in a camel-litter. On their return, the Muslim army stopped at a place, and she went outside the camel-litter to fulfil a need. The caravan moved forward thinking that the Messenger's wife was in the camel-litter, and she was separated from them. One of the individuals of the Muslim army, who had also remained behind, brought the wife of the Messenger, ʿĀ'ishah, back to the army. This event became a tool for the hypocrites to slander the wife of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). For this reason, verses 11 to 19 of Sūrah al-Nūr were revealed.[i]

لَّوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا
وَقَالُوا هَٰذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ... وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ
... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

When you heard about it [this slander], why did not the faithful, men and women, think well of themselves [and those who are like themselves], and say, "This is an obvious calumny"? ... Were it not for Allah's grace and His mercy upon you in this world and the Hereafter, there would have befallen you a great punishment for what you ventured into ... Indeed, those who want indecency to spread among the faithful—there is a painful punishment

i. al-Ṭabrasī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, vol. 7, p. 229.

> for them in the world and the Hereafter, and Allah knows, and you do not know. (24:12-19)

The revelation of these verses in this context shows the importance of this issue that the reputation and dignity of believers—especially those in charge of administering the Islamic society—must remain protected. This is because the enemy wants to use untrue matters to tarnish their image and remove the reliance of society on them. In this way the believers would begin fighting each other and the enemy can then use this to their own advantage.

4. The root of slander is suspicion and negative thoughts about someone that arise in one's mind. Such satanic thoughts can come about for anyone. If such bad thoughts are acted on, reliance on one another is lost in society, and the enemy can utilize this discord and absence of reliance to their own advantage, to make believers fight with one another.

Factors that Prevent Slander

1. Paying attention to the fact that the one who slanders shall also be slandered

God loves the believer and supports him. God's support for a believer against a slanderer is that if the believer is unable to defend himself, God defends him and disgraces the slanderer.

2. Paying attention to the bad effects of slandering

Every righteous action is an offshoot of faith and strengthens it. Similarly, every prohibited and blameworthy actions is an offshoot of the opposite of faith and weakens it. Slandering is one of the prohibited actions. Paying attention to its undesirable spiritual and social effects leads to its prevention.

How to Repent from Slandering

Repenting from slandering is in this way that the slanderer, in front of those people to whom he had mentioned the slander, must clear

the accused individual, and exonerate him from any wrongdoing. Just as how he had made himself look bigger and made that person look smaller by slandering him, he should now break his own self by admitting his mistake.

To destroy the reputation of Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him), Qārūn once gave money to an evildoing woman so that when Prophet Mūsā was admonishing the people, she would stand up and accuse him saying, "You yourself have acted against the Tawrāh and had an illicit relationship with me!" The woman came to the gathering, but when Prophet Mūsā started speaking, a transformation occurred within her and she said to herself, "Why should I contaminate a pure man with slander and destroy his dignity!" In this state, she got up and told Prophet Mūsā the truth of the matter. This action of hers paved the way for her salvation.[i]

The Necessity of Avoiding Situations of Slander

As mentioned before, the main root of slander is suspicion, and such suspicious thoughts can come about in anyone. Thus, one must not pave the way for others to have such bad thoughts about them. One must not intentionally perform an action or say something that can be interpreted in multiple ways, such that others can then misuse it. For example, to go to a place of sin and show no sign to indicate that one is going there to reform others. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says in this regard:

مَنْ عَرَّضَ نَفْسَهُ لِلتُّهَمَةِ فَلَا يَلُومَنَّ مَنْ أَسَاءَ بِهِ الظَّن

> One who puts himself in a situation where he can be slandered, should not blame those who develop bad thoughts regarding him.[ii]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 13, p. 253, no. 4.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 152, no. 137.

Responsibilities of People with Respect to Accusations

1. Perseverance

Sometimes noble people are subjected to slander by wicked people as a test from Allah. In such situations, they must show perseverance so that because of this perseverance, things become clear and those who had turned against them due to the slander, turn back. Prophet Ayyūb (peace be upon him) was subjected to slander by Shayṭān. Shayṭān said to God, "Ayyūb is only thankful because of the abundant blessings he has." Allah tested him through tribulations. At every stage of the tribulations that he endured, Ayyūb's thankfulness would increase, until all the plots of Shayṭān were foiled and he regained all the blessings he had lost. [i]

Just as how the prophets showed patience and perseverance in the face of slander, until they attained their lofty goals, believers must be the same. The *shayāṭin* always seek to put an end to religious activities.

2. Defending Oneself

Sometimes being silent in the face of slander causes a lie to spread in society. If one can defend the accused party against that slander but does not do so, then he is in fact a partner to the slanderer. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

الْعَامِلُ بِالظُّلْمِ وَ الْمُعِينُ لَهُ وَ الرَّاضِي بِهِ شُرَكَاءُ ثَلَاثَتُهُم

> The one who performs oppression, the one who helps in it and the one who is pleased with it, all three are partners [in the oppression]. [ii]

3. Admonition and Disassociation

When dealing with a slanderer, believers must first admonish him and explain to him the bad effects of slandering. If this does

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i. Refer to *Tafsīr al-qummī*, vol. 2, p. 239.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 333, no. 16.

not have any effect on him, then they should keep away from him.

5. Disclosing Secrets

Concealing secrets is an attribute from among the perfect attributes of Allah. If a person can conceal secrets, then he has manifested this Divine attribute in his own existence.

Types of Secrets

1. Divine Secrets

Divine secrets are important points from the deep teachings of religion that are accessible to very few individuals. Teachings such as the deep understanding and comprehension of monotheism (*tawhīd*) and the station of *wilāyah*, or teachings regarding the resurrection, are some of those affairs which not everyone can bear to hear.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ هَلْ يَرَاهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَ قَدْ رَأَوْهُ قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَقُلْتُ مَتَى قَالَ حِينَ قَالَ لَهُمْ- أَ لَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قالُوا بَلى ثُمَّ سَكَتَ سَاعَةً ثُمَّ قَالَ وَ إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَيَرَوْنَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَ لَسْتَ تَرَاهُ فِي وَقْتِكَ هَذ

Abū Baṣīr asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "Shall the believers see Allah the Invincible and Majestic, on the Day of Judgment?"
The Imam said, "Yes, and [not just during the resurrection, rather] they have seen Him before the resurrection also."
He asked, "When?"
The Imam said, "At the time when He said to them, 'Am I not your Lord?'
They said, 'Yes indeed!'"[i]
Then he paused for some time and then continued,

i. Qur'ān 7:172.

> "Indeed, the believers see Him before the resurrection, in this world. Do you not see Him now?!"

And then, to prevent any misconception regarding seeing a material body of Allah, and to hinder the denial of those who would deny such words, the Imam mentioned this point that seeing Allah means seeing Him through the eyes of the heart and the inner self. For indeed, Allah is far greater and more sanctified than that which the deniers—who deny due to their ignorance and out of deviation—and those who liken God to others, say regarding His attributes.[i]

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) did not allow Abū Baṣīr to narrate these matters to others, because it was possible that those who do not have a proper comprehension of such matters would incorrectly understand it and accuse him of blasphemy.

2. Secrets Related to the Imams (Peace be Upon Them)

When it comes to comprehending the spiritual levels of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them), it has been strongly advised that these should not be mentioned to everyone. Somebody came to Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) and the Imam said some things to them, including:

أَنَا الْأَوَّلُ وَ أَنَا الْآخِر

I am the first and I am the last...

But they misunderstood these words and wanted to leave. Imam ʿAlī stopped them and then said,

أَنَا الْأَوَّلُ أَوَّلُ مَنْ آمَنَ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص وَ أَنَا الْآخِرُ آخِرُ مَنْ نَظَرَ فِيهِ لِمَا كَانَ فِي لَحْدِه

> I am the first one who believed in the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and I am the last, [in that I was] the last who looked upon when

i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-tawḥīd*, p. 117, no. 20.

he was in his grave.[i]

Sometimes even showing love towards this family or mentioning their *wilāyah* and *imāmah* needs to be concealed. For instance, with respect to those who cannot bear these matters and accuse its speaker of polytheism. Similarly, when explaining these Islamic teachings would not have a positive effect, rather one's life or wealth would be threatened. It is not necessary to always invite others to follow the family of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) through one's tongue, rather the actions of a person can also attract people towards this family and show their truthfulness. As said by Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him):

كُونُوا دُعَاةً لِلنَّاسِ بِغَيْرِ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ لِيَرَوْا مِنْكُمُ الْوَرَعَ وَ الِاجْتِهَادَ وَ الصَّلَاةَ وَ الْخَيْرَ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ دَاعِيَة

> Invite people by means other than the tongue. They should see piety, endeavour, prayer, and goodness from you, as these are the things that invite others.[ii]

3. Personal Secrets

Everybody has secrets and personal matters in his life that are not advisable to be told to everyone. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

سِرُّكَ أَسِيرُكَ فَإِذَا أَفْشَيْتَهُ صِرْتَ أَسِيرَه

> Your secret is your captive. But if you disclose it, you become its captive.[iii]

Sometimes when some matters are disclosed to others, they become envious to such an extent that they start plotting to take away that blessing from that person. Thus, due to this negligence, this person loses his blessing. In such situations, concealing secrets is very important. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon

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i. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 2, pp. 385-386.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 78, no. 14.

iii. al-Wāsitī, *'Uyūn al-ḥikam wa al-mawā'iz*, p. 285.

him and his family) says:

اسْتَعِينُوا عَلَى أُمُورِكُمْ بِالْكِتْمَانِ فَإِنَّ كُلَّ ذِي نِعْمَةٍ مَحْسُود

Take help from concealment in [protecting] your affairs, because everyone who has a blessing becomes the object of envy. (i)

However, if one needs to seek counsel from someone in his affairs, then it is necessary to take counsel from the appropriate person. In the process of seeking counsel, one should only disclose their secrets to benefit from someone who is capable and trustworthy, such that they remain safe from envy and envious people.

4. The Secrets of Others

If a person becomes someone's trustee and hears his secrets, he must protect those secrets. Disclosing certain types of secrets is one of the greater sins, there are heavy penalties for this in the penal system of the *sharī'ah*, and it is something extremely reprehended in the Islamic traditions.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

عَوْرَةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ حَرَام

The 'awrah of a believer is prohibited for the other believer.

The narrator asked, "Does '*awrah* mean his private parts?" The Imam replied:

لَيْسَ حَيْثُ تَذْهَبُ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِذَاعَةُ سِرِّه

No, it is not as you suppose. Rather, it means disclosing a believer's secret. (ii)

This tradition uses the term '*awrah* (private part) for other people's secrets because to reveal one's private parts is a filthy act that even a child would refrain from.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 48.

ii. al-Kāshānī, *Al-wāfī*, vol. 5, p. 975.

Concealing Secrets: A Perfection of Faith, and an Attribute of God

Allah constantly covers the secrets (such as the defects and sins) of His servants, and this is one of the biggest blessings of God. The servants must also cover their own secrets and the secrets of others. Al-Shahīd al-Thānī[i] narrates the following in the book Al-ghaybah:

> وَ رُوِيَ أَنَّ مُوسَى ع اسْتَسْقَى لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ حِينَ أَصَابَهُمْ قَحْطٌ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ لَا أَسْتَجِيبُ لَكَ وَ لَا لِمَنْ مَعَكَ وَ فِيكُمْ نَمَّامٌ قَدْ أَصَرَّ عَلَى النَّمِيمَةِ فَقَالَ مُوسَى ع مَنْ هُوَ يَا رَبِّ حَتَّى نُخْرِجَهُ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا فَقَالَ اللَّهُ يَا مُوسَى أَنْهَاكُمْ عَنْ النَّمِيمَةِ وَ أَكُونُ نَمَّاماً فَتَابُوا بِأَجْمَعِهِمْ فَسُقُوا.
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> It is narrated that when famine struck the people of Banī Isrā'īl, Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him) prayed for rain. God revealed to him, "I will not answer this supplication of yours and those who are with you because among you there is one who does *namīmah* and who persists in doing it." Mūsā (peace be upon him) said, "O God! Who is that person? [Introduce him to us] so that we may remove him from among us." Then God said, "O Mūsā! Should I Myself do *namīmah* while I prohibit you from it?!" Thereafter all of them repented together and

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i. Zayn al-Dīn bin 'Alī al-'Āmilī (911-965 AH), famously known as "al-Shahīd al-Thānī", is one of the most prominent Shī'ah scholars in history. Despite a relatively short life span, he was a polymath who had studied and worked in all the various Islamic sciences such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, the intellectual sciences, geometry, math, Arabic grammar, *ḥadīth*, *kalām*, and history. His many works have been a source of blessings for the Shī'ah seminary. Books of his such as Munyah al-murīd in *akhlāq*, Al-ri'āyah fī 'ilm al-dirāyah in the study of *ḥadīth*, and most important of all Al-rawḍah al-bahiyyah fī sharḥ al-lum'ah al-damishqiyyah in the field of *fiqh*, have been seminary textbooks for centuries. Originally from a village in Lebanon, he travelled extensively in the pursuit of knowledge and studied under many teachers, both Shī'ah and Sunnī. In the year 965 AH he was arrested in the city of Makkah and taken to the Ottoman capital, Istanbul where he was martyred. (Ed.)

were quenched [by rain].[i]

Allah, through His attribute of covering, hid the secret of the one who did *namīmah* and by means of his repentance, Allah removed its effects and His blessings poured forth.

6. Abusive and Foul Language

One of the sins of the tongue that destroys a person's existence and has negative individual, social, material, and spiritual effects, is being abusive and saying foul things to a fellow believer. It has been narrated by Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) that the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ الْجَنَّةَ عَلَى كُلِّ فَحَّاشٍ بَذِيءٍ قَلِيلِ الْحَيَاءِ لَا يُبَالِي مَا قَالَ وَ لَا مَا قِيلَ لَهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ فَتَّشْتَهُ لَمْ تَجِدْهُ إِلَّا لِغَيَّةٍ أَوْ شِرْكِ شَيْطَانٍ فَقِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَ فِي النَّاسِ شِرْكُ شَيْطَانٍ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص أَ مَا تَقْرَأُ قَوْلَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ شارِكْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوالِ وَ الْأَوْلادِ

"Indeed, Allah has prohibited paradise on every abusive person who lacks dignity and has little shame, who does not care about what he says and what is said to him. Because if you investigate his state, either he is the product of *zinā* or the partner of Shayṭān." It was said, "O Messenger of Allah! Among the people, is there someone who is the partner of Shayṭān?" The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Have you not read the words of Allah, the Glorious and Majestic, 'and share with them in wealth and children?'"[ii] [iii]

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Al-jawāhir al-saniyyah*, p. 160.

ii. Qur'ān 17:64.

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 323, no. 3.

The Bad Effects of Abusive Language in This World and The Hereafter

Being abusive and speaking foul language to others not only causes degradation and destroys the speaker's personality in society, but also brings about negative inner and spiritual effects for the person. Likewise, the one who uses abusive language loses his standing in the eyes of God and is distanced from His favours. There is a tradition that states:

مَنْ فَحُشَ عَلَى أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ نَزَعَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ بَرَكَةَ رِزْقِهِ وَ وَكَلَهُ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ وَ أَفْسَدَ عَلَيْهِ مَعِيشَتَه

> Whoever speaks foul language to his Muslim brother, Allah removes blessings from his sustenance, leaves him to himself and destroys his life.[i]

Protecting one's tongue from abuse and foul language is so important that performing it causes the *awliyā'* of Allah and those who have a special station near Allah, to reject a person. This itself is the worst punishment.

'Amr ibn Nu'mān al-Ju'fī says, "Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) had a friend who would not leave him wherever he went and would not separate from him. One day he was with the Imam in the market of the shoemakers and along with him was his slave from Sind. Suddenly, he turned around looking for his slave but did not find him. Three times he turned back, still he didn't see him. The fourth time when he did see the slave, he said, "You bastard! Where were you?" Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) raised his hand and hit his forehead with it and said:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ تَقْذِفُ أُمَّهُ قَدْ كُنْتُ أَرَى أَنَّ لَكَ وَرَعاً فَإِذَا لَيْسَ لَكَ وَرَع

> Glory be to Allah! Are you accusing his mother of *zinā*?

i. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 325, no. 13.

I used to think that you have piety but now I see that you do not have any piety.

He said, "May I be sacrificed for you! His mother is from Sind and is a polytheist." The Imam said:

أَ مَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ نِكَاحاً تَنَحَّ عَنِّي

Aren't you aware that every nation has a marriage for themselves? Get away from me.

ʿAmr ibn Nuʿmān says, "After that I did not see him walking with the Imam until the time when death parted them from each other."[i]

i. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 324, no. 5.

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THE RIGHT OF THE EAR

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ السَّمْعِ فَتَنْزِيهُهُ عَنْ أَنْ تَجْعَلَهُ طَرِيقاً إِلَى قَلْبِكَ إِلَّا لِفُوَّهَةٍ كَرِيمَةٍ تُحْدِثُ فِي قَلْبِكَ خَيْراً أَوْ تَكْسِبُ خُلُقاً كَرِيماً فَإِنَّهُ بَابُ الْكَلَامِ إِلَى الْقَلْبِ يُؤَدِّي إِلَيْهِ ضُرُوبُ الْمَعَانِي عَلَى مَا فِيهَا مِنْ خَيْرٍ أَوْ شَرٍّ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the ear is to keep it pure from making it a path to your heart for anything except honourable speech which brings about goodness in the heart or produces noble character. For indeed the ear is the doorway for speech to enter the heart and deliver meanings, good as well as bad, to the heart. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE ROLE OF THE EAR IN A PERSON'S GUIDANCE

The human being's outward faculties such as the faculty of hearing are the gateways to his heart. If this faculty is contaminated with evil, it contaminates the heart as well, whereas if it remains pure and contains goodness, it guides the heart. Thus, those who seek

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 257.

guidance should prepare the grounds for their heart's guidance by choosing and hearing the best of speech. Allah says the following in the Qur'ān, giving glad tidings to such servants of His:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

> So, give good news to My servants who listen to the [different] words and follow the best of them. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect. (39:17-18)

A person, out of his own choice, listens to that which he wishes, but he must then ponder on it to differentiate the good and bad. Just as Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says:

فَإِنَّمَا الْبَصِيرُ مَنْ سَمِعَ فَتَفَكَّرَ

> Indeed, the person with insight is one who listens and then contemplates. [i]

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ACTIONS OF THE EAR

A person can perform two types of actions with his ears: positive and negative. These actions must be evaluated based on the teachings of Islam. The following are some of the positive functions of the ears:

1. Attaining gnosis (*ma'rifah*)
2. Acquiring beneficial knowledge
3. Listening carefully
4. Listening to the Qur'ān
5. Listening to a believer when he is confiding in you
6. Listening to someone who is seeking advice
7. When a judge listens to the plaintiff and the defendant
8. Listening to one's spouse at home
9. Listening to one's children to then take the necessary action to

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i. al-Radī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 153.

train and discipline them

Some of these will be explained here.

1. Attaining Gnosis (Maʿrifah)

An intellectual person who is on the path towards reaching realities and allowing the perfections of his existence to develop, must either be a learned speaker who makes others familiar with these realities or must be a careful listener, seeking the enlightenment of his soul. The people of remembrance (*ahl al-dhikr*) are such, instead of being attentive to the world, they choose the remembrance of God. None of the worldly affairs prevent them from His remembrance. One of their attributes is that by employing their faculties, such as seeing and hearing, to perform sincere actions, they have attained gnosis (*maʿrifah*) and luminosity (*nūrāniyyah*). Moreover, they also guide others towards these. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) describes them saying:

فَاسْتَصْبَحُوا بِنُورِ يَقَظَةٍ فِي الْأَبْصَارِ وَ الْأَسْمَاعِ وَ الْأَفْئِدَة

They have kindled the lantern [of guidance] in their eyes, ears, and hearts through the light of wakefulness. [i]

2. Acquiring Beneficial Knowledge

One of the qualities of the pious is that they seek to acquire beneficial knowledge. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says, regarding these individuals, that:

وَ وَقَفُوا أَسْمَاعَهُمْ عَلَى الْعِلْمِ النَّافِع

[The pious ones] have dedicated their ears for [listening to] beneficial knowledge. [ii]

Beneficial knowledge opens the way, allowing the human's soul to reach the unseen realm. Therefore, all those who seek to acquire

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 222.

ii. Ibid., sermon no. 193.

knowledge should ask themselves at the end of every lesson: What will the final outcome of this lesson be? What effect did this lesson have on my soul and on my movement towards the truth?

With this perspective, even the empirical sciences can be a means of attaining beneficial knowledge and signs of Allah. This is because by learning these sciences, a person understands the wonders of God's creation; through them, the greatness of the creator is manifested in his view. The Noble Qur'ān says in this regard:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

> Have they not travelled through the land so that they may have hearts by which they may exercise their reason, or ears by which they may hear? (22:46)

3. Listening Carefully

If a person utilizes his faculty of hearing on the path of guidance and God's servitude then as per the saying of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him), he benefits from it completely,[i] and such a person can hear the cries of the past or distant future.

Even though Uways al-Qaranī did not see the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and did not hear his sayings directly from him, he employed his faculty of hearing properly. He listened to the words of truth well, acted on them, and attained a high station. There were others who were by the side of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) but did not use their faculty of hearing appropriately, thereby making themselves wretched and degraded.

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 670, no. 1590.

من أحسن الإستماع تعجّل الإنتفاع

Whoever listens well comes to benefit quickly

THE OUTCOME OF CORRECTLY UTILIZING THE FACULTY OF HEARING

Listening to wise words and allowing them to penetrate one's soul results in softness of the heart and causes one to attain unseen realities. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ تَقِيَّةَ مَنْ سَمِعَ فَخَشَع

Be wary of God like the wariness of someone who heard [the truth] and then became humble.[i]

Whoever seeks the truth will undoubtedly be humbled in front of wise words. The Noble Qur'ān says the following describing those Christian scholars who were looking for the truth and whose disposition was one of truth-seeking, when they heard the words of the Qur'ān:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ

When they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you see their eyes fill with tears because of the truth that they recognize. (5:83)

But it introduces those who do not utilize their faculty of hearing correctly as being dead:

إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَىٰ

You cannot make the dead hear. (27:80)

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says the following describing one who does not employ his faculty of hearing on the path of attaining the truth:

فَالصُّورَةُ صُورَةُ إِنْسَانٍ وَ الْقَلْبُ قَلْبُ حَيَوَانٍ ... ذَلِكَ مَيِّتُ الْأَحْيَاء

i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 83.

> His outward form is like that of a human being, but his heart is the heart of an animal ... that is a dead a person who seems alive.[i]

SINS AND FILTHY ACTIONS OF THE EAR

The first and foremost right of the ear is to leave aside the sins related to it. The sins of this body part prevent a person from comprehending realities, render his heart dark and eventually distance him from the truth. Therefore, by recognizing the sins of this body part and the ways to abandon them, a person can fulfil its right. As a result, he can comprehend realities by means of his ear and embark on the correct path of God's servitude.

Some sins and filthy actions that a person can become afflicted with by means of his ears, are as follows:

1. Listening to lies
2. Listening to singing (*ghinā*)
3. Listening to backbiting
4. Listening to ignorant speech
5. Listening to the voice of a *non-maḥram*
6. Listening to idle talk
7. Listening to discussions that cause doubts and deviate when one's own faith is weak
8. Listening to slander

Here we will expound on some of the above-mentioned instances which most people are afflicted with:

1. Listening to Singing (Ghinā)

Listening to prohibited music and the likes of it, which is unfortunately considered to be normal among people, causes extremely negative effects on a person's soul. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says to Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him):

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 87.

يَا عَلِيُّ ثَلَاثَةٌ يُقْسِينَ الْقَلْبَ اسْتِمَاعُ اللَّهْو...

O Ali! Three things cause hardness of the heart: listening to *lahw* [entertaining music] ...[i]

Some people, due to their relationships with bad friends, indulge in listening to vulgar and prohibited music so much so that they become accustomed to it and its filthiness disappears in their view.

Also, some people visit obscene websites under the pretext of recognizing evil and being able to forbid it. But by listening to vulgar music and watching immoral scenes, slowly and gradually they themselves also fall prey to such sins!

2. Listening to Backbiting

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said:

السَّامِعُ لِلْغِيبَةِ أَحَدُ الْمُغْتَابَيْن

The listener of backbiting is one of the two backbiters.[ii]

3. Listening to Ignorant Talks and Deviating Matters

One must pay heed to this fact that the pivot of all commandments in the *sharīʿah*—be they pertaining to action, *akhlāq*, society or other domains—is the servitude of Allah. According to the *sharīʿah*, all body parts are answerable before God. A person's ears are responsible when it comes to listening to speech that is untrue or uncertain, and they will be questioned regarding it. The Noble Qur'ān says:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed hearing, eyesight, and the heart—all of these are accountable. (17:36)

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 76, p. 252, no. 6.

ii. al-Wāsiṭī, *ʿUyūn al-ḥikam wa al-mawāʿiẓ*, p. 27.

Speech that moves a person from ignorance towards knowledge—that is, speech that increases his awareness about himself, the world of existence, its relationship with Allah as well as the hereafter—is of special importance, because it leads a person towards a basic and fundamental understanding. This is as opposed to most human sciences where human beings are considered from a purely material perspective. Such sciences naturally encourage a person to pay attention to and long for this world and its mundane affairs. They hold him back from paying attention to his true reality and performing righteous actions.

Ignorant speech affects those whose faith is weak, prevents them from being committed to their faith and from the performance of important actions and good deeds. Thus, one must not listen to those who intentionally disseminate doubts among believers regarding the foundations of religion and Islamic beliefs, or those who deceive people by making them attentive to the world. If someone truly has a doubt about these matters, then they should pose it to someone who is capable such that the reality is clarified for them.

4. Listening to the Voice of a Non-Maḥram

Listening to the soft and amorous voice of women corrupts a person's heart and is the cause of unhealthy relationships in society. It is for this reason that Allah says in the Qur'ān, addressing the wives of the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا

> O wives of the Prophet! You are not like other women: if you are wary [of Allah], do not be complaisant [and enticing] in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a sickness should aspire; speak honourable words. (33:32)

The 'sickness of the heart' mentioned in the verse implies the human being's natural inclination. The human takes pleasure from

a beautiful voice and becomes inclined towards it, and as a result is taken towards corruption. To prevent corruption in society, Allah has forbidden men from listening to the soft voice of women other than their wives. Even if women do not observe this matter, men must not listen to their voice.

5. Listening to Falsehood

Listening to falsehood, especially when it comes to matters of belief, society, and politics, has been extremely reproached. The Noble Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

> O you who have faith! If a vicious character brings you some news, verify it, lest you should afflict [harm] on some people out of ignorance, and then become regretful for what you have done. (49:6)

God's admonition is to not listen to the account of an evildoer and to investigate the matter. By simply listening to his words, do not initiate war and bloodshed! Likewise, it is prohibited to listen to someone who seeks to get close to certain people and acquire a position, by lying.[i] One who listens and acts according to the words of such people has in reality worshipped them and allowed his ears to be the place that their satanic thoughts infiltrate. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says the following regarding this:

مَنْ أَصْغَى إِلَى نَاطِقٍ فَقَدْ عَبَدَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ عَنِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ وَ إِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ عَنْ إِبْلِيسَ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ إِبْلِيس

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, letter no. 10.

وَ لَا تُمَكِّنِ الْغُوَاةَ مِنْ سَمْعِك

Do not give your ears to those who have gone astray.

> One who listens to a speaker has in fact worshipped him. If the speaker speaks Godly words, then he has worshiped God and if the speaker speaks satanic words, then he has worshipped Shayṭān. [i]

The reasoning mentioned in the tradition includes all types of words. Hence, political news broadcasted by foreign radios which is generally false, must not be listened to. The human's soul normally looks for faults and rarely considers the merits of others. Thus, when one listens to false news, he gathers information in a prohibited manner. Such false news accounts unconsciously affect those who have little familiarity with the principles of politics and rulership, and whose ability to analyse is not strong. They make such people pessimistic and negative towards the Islamic revolution and its principles, as well as regarding the officials and worthy personalities of the revolution.

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 69, p. 264, no. 1.

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THE RIGHT OF THE EYE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ بَصَرِكَ فَغَضُّهُ عَمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَ تَرْكُ ابْتِذَالِهِ إِلَّا لِمَوْضِعِ عِبْرَةٍ تَسْتَقْبِلُ بِهَا بَصَراً أَوْ تَسْتَفِيدُ بِهَا عِلْماً فَإِنَّ الْبَصَرَ بَابُ الِاعْتِبَارِ

> And the right of the eye is that you lower it before everything which is unlawful for you, and you do not employ it or strain it for anything except the areas of taking heed, which cause you to acquire some knowledge or insight. For indeed, the eyes are the doorway of lessons.[i]

THE FACULTY OF SIGHT AND ITS IMPORTANCE

One of the blessings which God mentions as being a favour to the human, is the faculty of seeing:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّن بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۙ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

> Allah has brought you forth from the bellies of your mothers while you did not know anything. He made for you hearing, eyesight, and hearts so that you may give

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 257.

thanks. (16:78)

One of the means of the human's relationship with and awareness regarding the external world is through the faculty of sight. The awareness acquired through this faculty is in harmony with the human's inner inclinations—such as the inclination towards acquiring perfection, curiosity, and the inclination to discover realities—and it causes the human to move from his initial, rudimentary awareness to the pinnacles of knowledge. In the empirical sciences, the human has uncovered deep, precise, and subtle scientific knowledge due to the external perceptions of the faculty of sight combined with his inner curiosity. Animals also possess these external perceptions, but they cannot benefit from them in a scientific way like human beings can.

Paying attention to and contemplating on those things perceived by the faculty of sight brings about higher forms of insight for a person, and the eyes of his intellect and heart are opened towards the *malakūt*.

أَوَلَمْ يَنظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ

> Have they not contemplated on the *malakūt* of the heavens and the earth, and whatever things Allah has created [so that they take heed from it and find the path to the unseen world]? (7:185)

The way man sees during his sleep is different than his seeing during wakefulness, it has certain distinctive traits. Likewise, perception in the *malakūtī* world also has distinctions over seeing in the material world, in fact there is no comparison between them. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

غُضُّوا أَبْصَارَكُمْ تَرَوْنَ الْعَجَائِب

> Shut your eyes [from that which is prohibited and vain]

in order to see wonders [which others do not see].[i]

BENEFITS OF CORRECTLY UTILIZING THE FACULTY OF SIGHT

1. Acquiring Insight (Baṣīrah)

Allah commands the human to travel over the land so that he sees and contemplates on the fate of people and the manner of the world's creation. By doing so, he can understand how the world of the hereafter will come into existence and can acquire deep insight (basīrah).[ii] If the human carefully ponders on the beings of the earth, he can understand how these beings were first created, in a general sense. For example, he can observe how a seed which sprouts from within the soil gradually changes into a big tree, or how a drop of sperm turns into a human with comprehension and sense. Moreover, such contemplation can lead a person to understand the hereafter and believe in it. The Noble Qur'ān says:

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ خُلِقَ مِن مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ يَخْرُجُ مِن بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ

> So let the human consider from what he was created. He was created from an effusing fluid which issues from between the loins and the breastbones. Indeed, He is able to bring him back [after death]. (86:5-8)

At a higher level and with deeper scrutiny, man comprehends his connection with his creator by observing existence itself and the intricacies of creation. By contemplating on the relationships between beings and their needs, the human being understands that the absolute self-sufficient being and the source of all existence is God alone. One who does not appreciate these deeper realities, remains immersed in these apparent relationships, and is deprived

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 101, p. 41, no. 52.

ii. Qur'ān 29:20.

of ascending and reaching perfection. Because he heedlessly passed by those things that were supposed to be comprehended by one's sight, and did not take lessons from them, in the other world he will not be given any attention either and will be afflicted with severe spiritual pain and sorrow. That is why Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) asks for insight (*basīrah*) from God in Du'ā' abū hamzah al-thumālī, saying:

اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِنِي بَصِيرَةً فِي دِينِكَ

O Allah! Grant me awareness and insight regarding the religion.[i]

2. Taking Lessons ('Ibrah)

'Ibrah lexically means to pass across something and reach something else. Those who interpret dreams are referred to as *mu'abbir* because they pass across the apparent images seen in the dream and—considering the disposition of the one who had the dream—reach the appropriate understanding of the dream. True believers look at the world and at their surroundings with a perspective of taking lessons,[ii] as a result of which they pass across this world and reach the hereafter. By observing different scenes in nature—such as the growing of plants in the springtime and their going to sleep in the autumn and winter, or the differences between various plants and their fruits—they learn a lesson about God and the resurrection. The Noble Qur'ān says the following about this:

... وَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ الْخُرُوجُ

...and with it [the rain] We revive a dead country. Likewise, will be the rising [from the dead]. (50:11)

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i. al-Kaf'amī, *Miṣbāḥ al-kaf'amī*, p. 600.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 222.

إِنَّمَا يَنْظُرُ الْمُؤْمِنُ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا بِعَيْنِ الِاعْتِبَار

A believer looks at the world with the perspective of taking lessons.

As per the words of the Qur'ān, if there is no lesson taken from it, the world (*dunyā*) is nothing but diversion (*lahw*) and play (*laʿib*),[i] and one who is completely immersed in play cannot see beyond himself and is plunged into negligence. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

فَكُلُّ نَظَرٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ اعْتِبَارٌ فَهُوَ سَهْو

> Every look that does not have a lesson in it [regarding being attentive to and seeking the path towards the unseen realm and God] is futile.[ii]

The Outcomes of Taking Lessons

If the human considers himself to be solely within the limits of time, then he will perish with time. However, his reality is beyond time and space; he must pay attention to this. If he does so and also looks at the world and the events taking place in it with the perspective of taking lessons, then he can develop a relationship with the people of the past, the people of the future, and even with the immaterial realm. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ عَرَفَ الْعِبْرَةَ فَكَأَنَّمَا عَاشَ فِي الْأَوَّلِين

> If a person recognizes lessons [and builds his life based on these lessons] then he is like someone who has lived with the people of the past.[iii]

When such a person analyses his own life and the life of others, he understands by which means the people of the past acquired real benefits and due to which factors they incurred losses and fell into perdition. As a result, he strives to keep himself far from dangers and near to real benefits.

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i. Qur'ān 29:64.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 215.

iii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, p. 231, no. 74.

The Way to Take Lessons

One of the factors that prepares the causes for a person to take lessons, is to abandon forbidden and futile actions. Undoubtedly however, futile actions—which keep a person far from the path of learning lessons—are very many, due to the different body parts and activities of a person. Thus, it is a difficult task to refrain from all of them at once in the early stages of self-purification. Doing so might cause weariness of the soul or even an aversion towards self-purification altogether. However, if carried out gradually and with planning, one can reach such a level. To begin with, one must abandon all forbidden (*ḥarām*) actions related to each body part, in order to gradually approach the higher levels. Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

رَأْسُ الْوَرَعِ غَضُّ الطَّرْف

> The foundation of piety is to lower one's eyes [from looking at blameworthy things].[i]

The eye, as an important body part, is constantly and in a stealthy manner, taking images from its surroundings. However, just like a person is careful about what he eats,[ii] he must also be careful about what his eyes see in order to derive the benefits related to one's faith from this body part. For example, he should look at lush and barren land, youth and old-age, health and illness, all with the perspective of taking a lesson.

A person can also strengthen his faculty of contemplation and liberate the movements of his thoughts from the dominance of Shayṭān. Even though this job is very difficult, it is possible. If one focuses all his actions on revolving around the axis of obeying God's commandments, then he will attain Divine blessings the likes of which secular schools of thought cannot even come close to. One of the important factors involved in reaching such an objective is

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i. al-Wāsitī, *'Uyūn al-ḥikam wa al-mawā'iẓ*, p. 264.

ii. Qur'ān 80:24.

to continuously perform righteous deeds and have pure thoughts. This is similar to that which is mentioned in traditions, that continuously performing good actions is better than performing abundant actions that do not continue.[i] Or it is like food that should be eaten gradually at different intervals throughout the day, so that the bodily faculties do not weaken. Continuously taking lessons brings about many outcomes for a person; it makes him attain insight and keeps him away from badness.[ii]

NEGATIVE ACTIONS OF THE EYE

To have complete control over all the actions of the eye and save it from performing even the smallest futile action, it is necessary to first recognize its negative actions (both the prohibited and disliked actions), and refrain from them. The following list contains some instances which are negative actions of the eyes in Islam:

1. Looking at those afflicted with a calamity, with a look of being superior to them, not in order to take a lesson
2. Looking at one's parents with anger
3. Backbiting through one's eyes
4. Looking in a derisive and mocking manner
5. Looking in a disdainful and belittling manner
6. Looking at anything that is prohibited to look at (those who are *non-maḥram*, obscene images and videos, things which may cause corruption, etc.)
7. Looing in a mean and menacing manner

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 278.

قَلِيلٌ تَدُومُ عَلَيْهِ أَرْجَى مِنْ كَثِيرٍ مَمْلُولٍ مِنْه

The little that you perform continuously is more worthy of hope than the abundant actions which you get tired of [and abandon].

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 819, no. 116.

دَوَامُ الِاعْتِبَارِ يُؤَدِّي إِلَى الِاسْتِبْصَارِ وَ يُثْمِرُ الِازْدِجَار

Continuance in taking lessons makes one attain insight (*baṣīrah*) and distances him from badness

8. Looking inside the houses of others

Some of the above-mentioned instances are explained in the following sections.

1. Backbiting Through One's Eyes

Just as how a person can backbite with his tongue, or by listening to backbiting with his ears, and thus join the ranks of the those who backbite, in the same way he can also backbite with his eyes. This is done by attracting the attention of others towards someone's hidden defects, by indicating their defects with the movement of the eye.

2. Looking in a Disdainful and Belittling Manner

To belittle a believer by any means is extremely reproached in Islam. Sometimes with a single demeaning look, a believer is humiliated. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَن أَهَانَ فَقِيراً مُسْلِماً مِنْ أَجْلِ فَقْرِهِ وَ اسْتَخَفَّ بِهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَخَفَّ بِحَقِّ اللَّهِ وَ لَمْ يَزَلْ فِي مَقْتِ اللَّهِ وَ سَخَطِهِ حَتَّى يُرْضِيَه

> One who humiliates and looks disdainfully at a poor Muslim on account of his poverty and destitution, has undoubtedly considered God's right (*ḥaqq*) to be insignificant and [such a person] shall always be the object of God's anger and disgust until he makes that poor Muslim pleased with him.[i]

By observing our actions and behaviour, we can find out to what extent we have been negligent concerning our relationship with our brothers in religion. As a result of such negligence, good deeds do not influence our souls, because unworthy actions prevent a person from progress and perfection. That's why we have been advised to

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-aʿmāl*, p. 283.

learn religious teachings, to be aware of the ugly actions and their negative consequences, and to then refrain from them.

3. Looking at a non-Maḥram

One of the human's afflictions, from which he derives a short-lived and material pleasure, is looking at those who are *non-maḥram*. This action is prohibited by the *sharī'ah* and brings about chastisement in the hereafter. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

لِكُلِّ عُضْوٍ مِنِ ابْنِ آدَمَ حَظٌّ مِنَ الزِّنَا فَالْعَيْنُ زِنَاهُ النَّظَر

> For every body part of the son of Ādam there is a share in *zinā*, and the *zinā* of the eye is looking (at a *non-maḥram*).[i]

The Noble Qur'ān has also advised casting down one's gaze from looking at a *non-maḥram* and considers this to be the cause of purity, saying:

قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

> Tell the faithful men to cast down their looks [from looking at a *non-maḥram*] and to guard their private parts. That is more decent for them. Allah is indeed well aware of what they do. (24:30)

This verse has a great lesson for us which is this that Allah has complete awareness over all our actions and even our inactivity. He observes all human activity, even those actions which are performed quietly such as the activities of eyes. He knows which glances are out of kindness and are permissible and which glances are treacherous and forbidden. A filthy glance is an arrow from Shayṭān, aimed at the heart of the human, and it damages his faith. Therefore, a person

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 101, p. 38, no. 35.

must control his glances to not fall into perdition. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

أَوَّلُ النَّظْرَةِ لَكَ وَ الثَّانِيَةُ عَلَيْكَ وَ لَا لَكَ وَ الثَّالِثَةُ فِيهَا الْهَلَاك

The first glance [that is without attentiveness] is for you [it is not problematic, it is not a sin], the second glance is against you [it is harmful for a person] and the third glance brings about annihilation. (i)

Filthy looks increase one's sexual desires with respect to the opposite or same gender and this fire increases his inner anxiety, (ii) and burns him from the inside. Shaytān also assists this phenomenon through his *waswasah*, and this can reach such an extent that if the person does not come to his senses, he will fall into sin even next to the House of God.

ز دست دیده و دل هر دو فریاد
هر آن چه دیده بیند دل کند یاد

From the sight and the heart there comes a cry,
That whatever the eyes see, the heart shall remember. (iii)

Crying for the sake of God and out of love for the *awliyā'* of Allah is a blessing which God grants a person through his eyes. However, due to committing sins this blessing is taken away from them. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said:

مَا جَفَّتِ الدُّمُوعُ إِلَّا لِقَسْوَةِ الْقُلُوبِ وَ مَا قَسَتِ الْقُلُوبُ إِلَّا لِكَثْرَةِ الذُّنُوب

A person's tears do not dry up except because of the

i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 474, no. 4658.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 23.

مَنْ أَطْلَقَ طَرْفَهُ كَثُرَ أَسَفُه

One who sets free his eyes [and does not control them], his inner uneasiness increases

iii. *Dīvān-i Bābā Ṭāhir.*

> hardening of his heart, and the hearts do not become hard unless the sins increase.[i]

The Way to Control the Eye

The primary and the best way to control one's eyes is to control one's thoughts and direct them. Thoughts are like the command centre which if controlled, a person's other actions and behaviour will also be controlled and find their direction, because everyone acts in accordance with their character and inner disposition.[ii] There is a proverb that states:

از کوزه همان برون تراود که در اوست

From a clay jug, only that which is inside it will come out.[iii]

Of course, to take hold of the reins of one's thoughts is a difficult job, but it is possible. A person can gradually direct his eyes and control them by analysing the lessons in that which he sees, by performing self-stipulation (*mushāraṭah*) every day, and by reading about the fate of those who left their eyes uncontrolled and were afflicted with its consequences. Similarly, this can be achieved by carefully considering the lives of those who shut their eyes from that which was forbidden and attained lofty stations in this world and the hereafter.

If a person wants to safeguard his faith and ensure his heart is on to the path of faith, then he must exert efforts. From the apparent perspective, he must endure certain restrictions. He must ignore the momentary pleasures of forbidden sights—such as obscene images and videos, and the thousands of provocative scenes that pass before his eyes every day—to acquire the lasting pleasures and beautiful sights of paradise.[iv] Those pleasures shall never cease, and moreover

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i. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 256.

ii. Qur'ān 17:84.

iii. *Dīvān-i Shaykh Bahā'ī*

iv. Qur'ān 43:71.

their sights are mingled with delicious tastes and other pleasures, and none of them are tainted with difficulty or sorrow.[i]

Actions and movements such as seeing, that take place quickly and are constantly repeated, are more prone to negligence than other actions. Hence, they require more attention and careful accounting. Every morning one must make an agreement with himself that he shall be more vigilant of his eyes today. Similarly, at the end of each day he must review all the scenes that passed before his eyes throughout the day and once again make an agreement with himself that tomorrow he shall shut his eyes from those forbidden scenes. In this way, a person's eyes and glances can gradually come under his control.

POSITIVE ACTIONS OF THE EYE

1. Refraining from looking at that which is prohibited
2. Staring at something to concentrate on positive thoughts
3. Looking lovingly at one's children
4. Looking at a *kafan* (a shroud for the deceased)
5. Looking lovingly at one's spouse
6. Looking at the Ka'bah
7. Looking at a scholar
8. Looking at a just Imam
9. Looking at a brother in religion
10. Looking at the *sādāt* (descendants of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him and his family)
11. Looking at the Qur'ān
12. Crying due to fear of God and the resurrection, out of love towards God, to show love towards God and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), or crying due to the suffering faced by them

Some of the above-mentioned instances are explained in the following sections.

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i. Qur'ān 52:23.

1) Looking at a Scholar

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

النَّظَرُ فِي وَجْهِ الْعَالِمِ حُبّاً لَهُ عِبَادَة

> Looking at the face of a scholar, due to love towards him, is worship.[i]

An affectionate look at the face of a scholar, when performed because of his knowledge, spirituality, and his adherence to his knowledge, is considered worship. If continued, such looks produce many benefits for a person. Looking at deviated scholars for the purpose of learning a lesson is also worship. Every group of people in the world has good and bad in it; some scholars are Godly scholars while others are corrupt. Thus, the characteristics of Godly scholars for whom it is worship to look at their face, has been mentioned in traditions. It was asked from Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "Looking at which scholar is worship?" The Imam replied:

هُوَ الْعَالِمُ الَّذِي إِذَا نَظَرْتَ إِلَيْهِ ذَكَّرَكَ الْآخِرَةَ وَ مَنْ كَانَ خِلَافَ ذَلِكَ فَالنَّظَرُ إِلَيْهِ فِتْنَة

> The scholar whom looking at him makes you remember the hereafter. But as for the scholar who is the opposite of that, looking at him is corruption [and causes you to deviate].[ii]

One of the Godly and influential scholars in our time was Imam Khumaynī (may Allah's mercy be upon him). He played an important role in the spiritual and religious growth of society, on both the individual and social level. Reading and analysing the life of such scholars, has an extraordinary influence on a person's spiritual growth.

On the other hand, looking at a scholar who strives against the

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 1, p. 205, no. 29.

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmūʿah warrām*, vol. 1, p. 84.

path of Godly objectives and whose soul has become wretched, causes a person to transform and pulls him towards wretchedness faster than others. This is because in the matters of knowledge, scholars are the standard-bearers; bad scholars are the standard-bearers of deviation and misguidance. Because a person's lower pleasures and natural inclinations are towards evil and selfishness, hence the person gets pulled faster towards deviation. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

زَلَّةُ الْعَالِمِ تُفْسِدُ عَوَالِم

The lapse of a scholar corrupts the worlds. [i]

From among the people of Prophet Mūsa (peace be upon him), Balʿam bin Bāʿūrā and al-Sāmirī, who were from Prophet Mūsa's students and followers, became standard-bearers of deviation and caused those with weaker faith to rally behind them.

2) Looking at One's Parents

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى وَالِدَيْهِ نَظَرَ رَحْمَةٍ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ نَظْرَةٍ حَجَّةً مَبْرُورَةً

Nobody looks with kindness at his parents, except that Allah records for him an accepted Hajj for every glance.

He was asked, "Even if he looks at them a hundred times in a day?" The Prophet replied:

وَ إِنْ نَظَرَ إِلَيْهِ فِي الْيَوْمِ مِائَةَ أَلْفِ مَرَّة

Even if he looks at them a hundred thousand times in a day! [ii]

Every interaction with one's parents has a corresponding effect

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i. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 47, no. 232.

ii. al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, vol. 15, p. 203.

on a person's life. Regarding the verse "lower the wing of humility to them, mercifully,"[i] Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says that this expression of the Qur'ān is a metaphor, implying that in different situations one must interact and behave affectionately with his parents. He then mentions some instances of affectionate interactions as follows:

لَا تَمْلَأْ عَيْنَيْكَ مِنَ النَّظَرِ إِلَيْهِمَا إِلَّا بِرَحْمَةٍ وَ رِقَّةٍ وَ لَا تَرْفَعْ صَوْتَكَ فَوْقَ أَصْوَاتِهِمَا وَ لَا يَدَكَ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمَا وَ لَا تَقَدَّمْ قُدَّامَهُمَا

Do not fill your eyes with a glance at them [one's parents] except out of kindness and sympathy. And do not raise your voice over theirs, nor your hands above theirs. And do not take steps ahead of theirs.[ii]

3. Looking at the Qur'ān and the Imams (peace be Upon Them)

Looking at the verses of the Qur'ān is worship,[iii] and if it is done along with contemplation about their meaning, then a person can take even more lessons from it. The Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَتَمَتَّعَ بِبَصَرِهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَلْيُكْثِرْ مِنَ النَّظَرِ فِي الْمُصْحَفِ

Whoever would like to benefit from their sight in this

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i. Qur'ān 17:24.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 158, no 1.

iii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 89, p. 65, no. 4.

النَّظَرَ فِي الْمُصْحَفِ عِبَادَة

Looking into the Quran is worship

world should constantly look at the Qur'ān.[i]

Likewise, it is in traditions that looking at the progeny of Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is worship.[ii] Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) narrates from the Messenger of God:

مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى كِتَابَةٍ مِنْ فَضَائِلِهِ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ الذُّنُوبَ الَّتِي اكْتَسَبَهَا بِالنَّظَرِ

If one looks at his ['Alī's, peace be upon him] virtues that have been written down, Allah forgives those sins of his that he performed by looking.[iii]

4. Looking at a Brother in Religion

An affectionate and facilitating look at a brother in religion is worship. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْأَخِ تَوَدُّهُ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عِبَادَة

Looking at a brother in religion while you love him for the sake of God is worship.[iv]

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i. al-Daylamī, *A'lām al-dīn fī ṣifāt al-mu'minīn*, p. 100.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 26, p. 227, no. 3.

النَّظَرُ إِلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ عِبَادَة

Looking at the progeny of Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is worship

iii. Ibid., vol. 26, p. 229, no. 10.

iv. Ibid., vol. 38, p. 196, no. 2.

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THE RIGHT OF THE FOOT

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ رِجْلَيْكَ فَأَنْ لَا تَمْشِيَ بِهِمَا إِلَى مَا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَ لَا تَجْعَلَهُمَا مَطِيَّتَكَ فِي الطَّرِيقِ الْمُسْتَخِفَّةِ بِأَهْلِهَا فِيهَا فَإِنَّهَا حَامِلَتُكَ وَ سَالِكَةٌ بِكَ مَسْلَكَ الدِّينِ وَ السَّبْقِ لَكَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of your feet is that you do not walk with them towards that which is unlawful for you, and you do not make them your ride on the path that causes contempt for the one who treads it, because they [should] carry you and make you walk on the path of religion and [in this case eventually] the prize shall be yours. And there is no power except through God.[i]

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF ONE'S BODY PARTS ON THE PATH OF SERVITUDE

The main objective of the life of this world, and the fundamental way for the seeker of true happiness, is to tread the path of Allah's sincere servitude in all dimensions of life. The tools and outward means for this journey are a person's body parts. The functions of

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 257.

these body parts play an important role in forming a person's soul and placing him on the real path of creation or deviating from it. It is for this reason that Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) mentions their rights in detail. One of the main body parts whose rights are mentioned by Imam al-Sajjād are the feet.

NEGATIVE ACTIONS OF THE FEET

The actions of a person's feet can be regarded to be of two types as per Islam: positive (obligatory and recommended) or negative (forbidden and disliked). The following instances can be mentioned as negative actions of the feet:

1. Going to give false testimony
2. Taking steps towards performing *namīmah*
3. Participating in gatherings of sin
4. Not going to witness or give testimony to prove the truth of a believer and establish his right
5. Escaping from jihad
6. Not going for Hajj despite having the financial and physical ability to do so
7. Heading out to create discord, especially among the believers, in different aspects such as politics, economy, and ethics
8. Going to steal
9. Going to help an oppressor

Here, some of the above-mentioned instances shall be explained:

1. Taking Steps to Speak Ill of a Believer

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

السَّاعِي قَاتِلُ ثَلَاثَةٍ قَاتِلُ نَفْسِهِ وَ قَاتِلُ مَنْ يَسْعَى بِهِ وَ قَاتِلُ مَنْ يَسْعَى إِلَيْهِ

> One who speaks ill [of a believer in front of an oppressive ruler] is a killer of three people: himself, the believer he spoke ill of, and the oppressive ruler [in front of whom

he spoke ill or performed *namīmah*].[i]

Those who perform *namīmah* and destroy the relationship between two individuals, or those who speak ill about someone in front of others due to envy or enmity, such people are not attentive to the fact that sometimes these endeavours result in war or bloodshed. Moreover, the first victim of these sins is the sinner himself. This is because in reality, his faith has been destroyed through this deed, and destroying one's faith is the same as killing one's soul. In particular, if this vilification of a believer was on account of his faith, then the final abode of the one who vilified him shall be the Hellfire.[ii] It is also possible that the one who performs *namīmah* may himself suffer losses in this world, for the scheme that he had orchestrated for others may engulf himself. However, if he truly repents, he is not afflicted with its external and internal consequences.

The second victim is the one who is spoken ill of because harm gets inflicted on him, or he is put in a situation where he may be killed. It is possible that because of *namīmah*, conflict breaks out between relatives, and at times someone may even be killed. In such a case, the one who performed *namīmah* is one of the causes of this bloodshed and shall face retaliatory punishment in the hereafter.

The third victim is the oppressive ruler who performs a crime because of the vilification he heard. Examples of such incidents can be found in the lives of the *awliyā'* of Allah. One of these incidents occurred when someone vilified Imam al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) in front of the Abbasid ruler Hārūn, which prepared the grounds for the Imam's martyrdom at the hands of Hārūn. 'Alī ibn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad says:

> Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far asked me to ask Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) for permission to allow him to go to Iraq, and to also ask the Imam that he be pleased with him and admonish and advise him. I

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 107, no. 73.

ii. Qur'ān 4:93.

talked to the Imam when we were alone, and he granted him permission. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl came to the Imam and said, "My dear uncle! I would like that you enjoin and advise me." The Imam replied, "I advise you to fear God and to not take part in the shedding of my blood!"

Muḥammad said, "May God curse the person who strives in shedding your blood!" Then he again said, "Advise me my dear uncle." Once again, the Imam said, "I advise you that you refrain from being a part of the shedding of my blood." Then Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) gave him a bag containing one hundred and fifty *dīnārs* and Muḥammad took it. Again, he gave him another bag containing one hundred and fifty *dīnārs* and he took it. For the third time, he gave him a bag containing one hundred and fifty *dīnārs*. Then the Imam commanded that a thousand five hundred *dirhams* which he had, be given to him. I considered all this money to be too much, so I objected to Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (peace be upon him). He said, "I gave this much so that I have more of an argument against him, [I can say] that I maintained family relations (*ṣilah al-raḥim*) with him, but he [still] severed it (*qaṭʿ al-raḥim*)."

Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl went to Iraq and with the same clothes that he had travelled with, before even disembarking at a place, he went to Hārūn's house and asked permission to enter. Immediately on entering, Muḥammad said to Hārūn, "O Amīr al-Mu'minīn! There are two caliphs on the face of the earth. Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar is there in Madinah, and people bring taxes to him. And you collect taxes in Iraq." On hearing this, Hārūn commanded that he be given a hundred thousand *dirhams*. When he collected the money, that same night a pain seized him. He died by midnight and the money was returned to the public treasury.[i]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 48, p. 239, no. 48.

2. Going to Participate in Gatherings of Sin

If one voluntarily goes to attend a gathering of sin, then this itself is a sin. For example, if someone voluntarily goes to a gathering while knowing that if he goes there, some people will force him to break his obligatory fast, then he has performed a sin. Also, going to a gathering with the knowledge that sins will be performed there is prohibited, even if the one going himself does not engage in those sins. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

لَا يَنْبَغِي لِلْمُؤْمِنِ أَنْ يَجْلِسَ مَجْلِساً يُعْصَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى تَغْيِيرِهِ

> It is not appropriate for a believer to participate in a gathering wherein sin is performed against Allah when he has no ability to stop that sin.[1]

This tradition includes all types of gatherings, be they family, social or political gatherings.

3. Not Going to Witness or Give Testimony

The Noble Qur'ān says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِندَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

> And who is a greater wrongdoer than someone who conceals a testimony that is with him from Allah? And Allah is not oblivious of what you do. (2:140)

The concealment of testimony mentioned in this verse includes someone who refused to give testimony about an event in front of a judge or anyone qualified for judgment, as well as the person who refused to be a witness and see that original event take place. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family)

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 374, no. 1.

says in a tradition:

مَنْ رَجَعَ عَنْ شَهَادَةٍ وَ كَتَمَهَا أَطْعَمَهُ اللَّهُ لَحْمَهُ عَلَى رُءُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ وَ يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ وَ هُوَ يَلُوكُ لِسَانَه

> Whoever takes back that which he witnessed and conceals it [by not giving testimony], then God shall make him eat his own flesh in front of the creation, and he will enter the Hellfire while he is chewing his tongue [and it is sticking out]. [i]

As per this tradition, in the hereafter the tongue of the one who conceals testimony is brought out just as he had hidden it in this world.

4. Going to Give False Testimony

Going to give truthful testimony results in the truth being established and causes the spiritual enlivenment of the human and society. In the same way, giving false testimony—such as testifying about murder, theft or illicit relations in a way that is either untrue or does not observe the religious regulations—also causes the soul to advance on the path of evil and enlivens this evil. If a person is not ashamed of this act and does not repent, it is possible that this act will gradually pull him towards disbelief. Generally, the efforts taken with regards to vilification, giving false testimony or concealing testimony, are all performed by means of the feet. Thus, these sins are attributed to the feet. Otherwise, the reality is that they are only considered to be one sin. [ii]

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i. al-Daylamī, *A'lām al-dīn fī ṣifāt al-mu'minīn*, p. 413.

ii. It is not the case that, for example, giving false testimony is one sin whereas walking to give the false testimony is another sin. (Translator)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SERVITUDE WITH REGARDS TO THE FEET

For each of a person's body parts, there are many responsibilities in the Divine *sharī'ah*, such as obligations, prohibitions, recommendations, and *akhlāqī* responsibilities. One who is seeking Allah's servitude finds no empty space in his day-to-day life for non-Godly affairs. As per the saying of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), a true servant is the one whose activities—be they his thoughts or his actions—are all directed towards the commands and prohibitions of God.[i]

Regarding the responsibilities of servitude that pertain to the feet, the following instances can be mentioned:

1. Going to acquire permissible sustenance
2. Exercise
3. Going to be in a place of worship such as going for Hajj, Friday prayers, congregational prayers, *ziyārah*, and processions for Islamic causes
4. Going for jihad
5. Reconciling between people
6. Participating in good gatherings
7. Going to teach and learn
8. Going to pass judgment and for any righteous deed
9. Travelling for the purpose of gaining proximity to God
10. Going to visit the ill
11. Going to help others and to fulfil their needs

Some of the above instances will be explained here:

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i. al-Ṭabarsī, *Mishkāt al-anwār fī ghurar al-akhbār*, p. 327.

وَ جُمْلَةُ اشْتِغَالِهِ فِيمَا أَمَرَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهِ وَ نَهَاهُ عَنْه

[In the famous narration of 'Unwān al-Baṣrī, when Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) was asked what the reality of servitude is, he answered with three things, the third of which is that] the servant spends all his time in acting upon commands of God and refraining from His prohibitions.

1. Going to Reconcile People

In traditions, abundant emphasis has been placed on the praiseworthy *akhlāqī* trait of reconciling believers. It is considered to be among those actions that cause a person to dwell under the shadow of the Divine Throne (*'arsh*). In some traditions, reconciling two individuals is considered to be charity (*ṣadaqah*) because charity is to part with goodness from oneself and make it reach others. Even though the apparent example of charity lies in giving money, when its broader meaning is considered, it also includes the person who spends from his own reputation for the purpose of re-establishing love between two individuals after it was lost. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

صَدَقَةٌ يُحِبُّهَا اللَّهُ إِصْلَاحٌ بَيْنِ النَّاسِ إِذَا تَفَاسَدُوا وَ تَقَارُبٌ بَيْنِهِمْ إِذَا تَبَاعَدُوا

> One of the charities (*ṣadaqah*) that Allah loves, is to reconcile people when discord has come about between them, and to establish closeness between them when they have grown apart. [i]

Reconciling two individuals is so important that it is not a problem to resort to a beneficial lie when carrying out this act. In this regard Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

الْكَلَامُ ثَلَاثَةٌ صِدْقٌ وَ كَذِبٌ وَ إِصْلَاحٌ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ قَالَ قِيلَ لَهُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ مَا الْإِصْلَاحُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ قَالَ تَسْمَعُ مِنَ الرَّجُلِ كَلَاماً يَبْلُغُهُ فَتَخْبُثُ نَفْسُهُ فَتَلْقَاهُ فَتَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ مِنْ فُلَانٍ قَالَ فِيكَ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ كَذَا وَ كَذَا خِلَافَ مَا سَمِعْتَ مِنْهُ

> "Speech is of three types: truth, falsehood, and reconciling people." He was asked, "May I be your ransom! What is reconciling people?" He said: "[When] you hear

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 209, no. 1.

something from a person regarding someone else in such a way that if the other person hears it, he will not like it. Then you meet that person and tell him, 'So-and-so said such-and-such good thing about you,' contrary to what you [actually] heard from him."[i]

2. Going to Mediate in a Marriage

One of the good and important actions in the eyes of Allah, is to facilitate the marriage of two individuals. Of course, this act has difficulties, but it brings about abundant rewards. Imam al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) says:

ثَلَاثَةٌ يَسْتَظِلُّونَ بِظِلِّ عَرْشِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ رَجُلٌ زَوَّجَ أَخَاهُ الْمُسْلِمَ...

Three [types of people] are under the shadow of the Divine Throne [and God's mercy is bestowed upon them in a special manner] on the day when there is no shadow except His shadow. [One of them is] the person who causes his Muslim brother to marry.[ii]

Shayṭān normally highlights the problems and obstacles of introducing individuals for marriage or taking measures to facilitate a marriage taking place. For example, he says, "This work will cause trouble for you. If the marriage is successful, they will say it's because we were good anyways. But if they face problems, they will say so-and-so introduced us to each other, his work was ill-fated!" In the first place, a Muslim is not supposed to say such things. Moreover, the fact is that introducing two individuals for marriage does not mean that they should not do any investigation regarding one another. They must not remain negligent regarding the attributes of the other individual and the personality differences between them.

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i. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 341, no. 16

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 141, no. 162.

3. Participating in Good Gatherings

3.1 Gatherings of the Ahl al-Bayt's (Peace be Upon Them) Remembrance

Participating in gatherings wherein the affair of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) is enlivened results in purification from sins and attaining perfection. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said to Fuḍayl:

تَجْلِسُونَ وَ تُحَدِّثُونَ؟

Do you sit together and mention our traditions?

Fudayl said, "Yes." The Imam said:

إِنَّ تِلْكَ الْمَجَالِسَ أُحِبُّهَا، فَأَحْيُوا أَمْرَنَا يَا فُضَيْلُ، فَرَحِمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ أَحْيَا أَمْرَنَا يَا فُضَيْلُ، مَنْ ذَكَرَنَا- أَوْ ذُكِرْنَا عِنْدَهُ- فَخَرَجَ مِنْ عَيْنِهِ مِثْلُ جَنَاحِ الذُّبَابِ، غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ ذُنُوبَهُ وَ لَوْ كَانَتْ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ زَبَدِ الْبَحْرِ

> Very I love those gatherings. O Fuḍayl! Enliven our affair [that of our religion]! May God bestow mercy upon the one who enlivens our affair. O Fuḍayl! If a person remembers us, or if we are remembered in front of him, and he sheds a tear the size of the wing of a fly, God forgives his sins even if they are more than the foam of the sea. [i]

3.2 Gatherings of Scholars

In the traditions, companionship and association with scholars has been highly emphasized. This is because it brings about awareness and insight regarding the path of truth and prepares the grounds for one's thoughts, *akhlāq* and soul to be rectified. Luqmān said to his son:

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i. al-Ḥimyarī, *Qurb al-isnād*, p. 36.

يَا بُنَيَّ جَالِسِ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَ زَاحِمْهُمْ بِرُكْبَتِكَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ يُحْيِي الْقُلُوبَ بِنُورِ الْحِكْمَةِ

> O my dear son! Sit with the scholars and trouble them by bending your knees before them [sit with humility before them, trouble them to seek knowledge and morals from them], for verily Allah the Mighty and Exalted enlivens hearts through the light of wisdom. [i]

All individuals, even those who are at high levels of knowledge, need such gatherings. This is because everyone has certain obstacles and causes of negligence that afflict them at every stage of their life. The disciples (*ḥawāriyyūn*) asked Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be upon him), "Who should we be the companion of?" He said:

مَنْ يُذَكِّرُكُمُ اللَّهَ رُؤْيَتُهُ وَ يَزِيدُ فِي عِلْمِكُمْ مَنْطِقُهُ وَ يُرَغِّبُكُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَمَلُه

> The one whom looking at makes you remember Allah, whose words increase your knowledge, and whose actions encourage you towards the hereafter. [ii]

Therefore, one who leads a person towards the world—regardless of whether he is a scholar or not—will not be a good companion for him. Similarly, a scholar who does not know how to employ his knowledge is not just unbeneficial for a person, but moreover he is harmful to him.

Attributes of the Scholars Worthy of Companionship

In the traditions, the attributes of those scholars who are worthy of companionship are mentioned. Among those traditions is the tradition of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) in which he says:

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i. al-Nīshābūrī, *Rawḍah al-wāʿiẓīn*, vol. 1, p. 11.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 44.

لَا تَجْلِسُوا إِلَّا عِنْدَ كُلِّ عَالِمٍ يَدْعُوكُمْ مِنْ خَمْسٍ إِلَى خَمْسٍ مِنَ الشَّكِّ إِلَى الْيَقِينِ وَ مِنَ الرِّيَاءِ إِلَى الْإِخْلَاصِ وَ مِنَ الرَّغْبَةِ إِلَى الرَّهْبَةِ وَ مِنَ الْكِبْرِ إِلَى التَّوَاضُعِ وَ مِنَ الْغِشِّ إِلَى النَّصِيحَة

Do not sit except with every scholar who calls you from five things towards five things: from doubt towards certainty, from ostentation (*riyā'*) towards sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), from longing [for the world] towards fear, from pride and arrogance towards humility, and from devising plots and deception towards benevolence.[i]

In this saying the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has mentioned the following attributes of scholars:

1. Increasing the Certainty of Others

Every knowledge that makes a person attain more certainty is desirable. On the other hand, the knowledge that shakes the foundations of one's religion is not desirable. Unless a person has acquired firm belief that is intellectually proven, he must not go after those subjects that sow the seed of doubt and uncertainty inside him. Paying heed to doubts and seeking them is beneficial for those who have the ability to respond to them. When responding to doubts, the Imams (peace be upon them) would first present points that are certain and understood by the questioner, and then based on that, they would answer his doubt.

2. Increasing the Sincerity (Ikhlāṣ) of Others

An unworldly scholar guides a person from ostentation towards sincerity through his words and actions.[ii]

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i. al-Daylamī, *A'lām al-dīn fī ṣifāt al-mu'minīn*, p. 272.

ii. Sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and its dimensions are explained in the beginning of the book, under the right of Allah.

3. Liberating Others from Worldly Attachments

The third quality of an unworldly scholar is that his conditions and his life direct people away from being attached to the world, towards having fear of the hereafter.

4. Leading Others Towards Humility

The fourth attribute is that he leads a person from arrogance towards humility. He is not a scholar who speaks proudly and presents an academic discussion while he is full of arrogance, boasting as if the skies opened up and he came down just to speak about it! For instance, sometimes such an arrogant person says, "Until today no one else has mentioned this!" But when we research, we find that the same thing was said by someone else a hundred years ago. Either he hadn't done his research properly, or he pretended not to know, so that the idea would be attributed to him!

5. Distancing Others from the Path of Falsehood

The fifth quality is that he brings people out of deception and advises them with utmost compassion, distancing them from the path of falsehood. Some traditions prohibit a person from being the companion of certain people. For example, it has been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) that he said:

لَا تَصْحَبُوا أَهْلَ الْبِدَعِ وَ لَا تُجَالِسُوهُمْ فَتَصِيرُوا عِنْدَ النَّاسِ كَوَاحِدٍ مِنْهُم

> Do not associate with those who innovate [in the religion] and do not sit in their company, for [if you do so] you will become one of them in the eyes of the people. [i]

In reality, those who innovate, divert the path of religion by inventing things and presenting things regarding the religion that

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 375, no. 3.

have no origin in religious sources. Therefore, one must refrain from associating with them because associating with them is tantamount to assisting them and making their position firm in society.

4. Going to Visit a Believer

Every person has specific responsibilities towards his fellow brothers in faith. One of these responsibilities is that he should be aware of their conditions and if they are in need, he should take the appropriate measures to help them. Visiting brothers in religion is one of the instances of social relationships that can have either positive or negative dimensions and consequences. If during these visits, the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) are mentioned and if people are encouraged to understand these teachings, act on them, and refrain from that which is not desirable as per the Ahl al-Bayt, then these visits acquire a higher nobility. In this regard Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

تَزَاوَرُوا فَإِنَّ فِي زِيَارَتِكُمْ إِحْيَاءً لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَ ذِكْراً لِأَحَادِيثِنَا وَ أَحَادِيثُنَا تُعَطِّفُ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَإِنْ أَخَذْتُمْ بِهَا رَشَدْتُمْ وَ نَجَوْتُمْ وَ إِنْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا ضَلَلْتُمْ وَ هَلَكْتُمْ فَخُذُوا بِهَا وَ أَنَا بِنَجَاتِكُمْ زَعِيم

> Visit one another because it causes your hearts to become enlivened and our traditions to be remembered. And our traditions make your hearts kind towards one another [and brings them closer to one another]. Thus, if you take our traditions, you shall grow and achieve salvation and if you abandon them, you shall deviate and perish. Thus, take them and I shall be the guarantor of your deliverance. [i]

If one's intention for visiting a fellow believer is to fulfil his need, he has in a sense enlivened the affair of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be

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i. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 186, no. 6; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 258, no. 56.

upon them). In fact, it was his love for the Ahl al-Bayt that made him move in this direction. In this regard, one must purify his intention. it should not be the case that he develops a relationship with his faithful brother only to derive material benefit from him, or that he expects such material benefits by visiting him, or that he expects the other person to also come visit him.

5. Going to Help Brothers in Faith

The Importance of Helping Brothers in Faith

One of the matters that is emphasized abundantly in the traditions is helping a brother in faith and fulfilling his needs. The more one performs this action while also being attentive to it being a commandment of God, the more the spiritual effect will be. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَنْ مَشَى فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ وَ مَنْفَعَتِهِ فَلَهُ ثَوَابُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّه

> One who moves to go and help his brother [in religion] and to bring benefit to him, shall have the reward of those who perform jihad in the path of Allah.[i]

As per religious teachings, worshipping is not limited to apparent acts of worship such as prayers and fasting. Rather, the extent of worship encompasses all of a person's actions. That's why the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has mentioned such a reward for helping brothers in faith in the above-mentioned tradition. Even if this initiative of helping one's brother in faith is not achieved, the individual still gets the reward of one who performs jihad. Perhaps the secret behind this is that a person's soul is selfish and always seeks its own benefits; it does not want others to acquire benefits in this world and the hereafter.

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-aʿmāl*, p. 288.

However, someone who moves in the direction of doing good to others has in fact taken steps against selfishness, which is the root of many wicked moral traits.

In another tradition the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَنْ قَضَى لِأَخِيهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ حَاجَةً كَانَ كَمَنْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ دَهْرًا

One who fulfils a need of his faithful brother is like the person who spent his lifetime worshipping Allah.[i]

Of course, the reward of helping a religious brother mentioned in this tradition does not mean that we are no longer in need of prayers, fasting and other obligatory and recommended actions, just as how some people say, "Worship is nothing but helping the creation of Allah!" Rather, what is intended is to mention a branch of faith and its importance so that when its conditions are available, a person does not fall short of performing it.

Another point here is that the intention of the helper must be to acquire the pleasure of God. Ungodly intentions such as making one's service feel like a favour, expecting recompense and so on, all nullify the effects of the righteous actions and prevent the desirable consequence of that action from taking place within a person's being. Therefore, performing a righteous deed while also observing its different conditions is something that requires a lot of effort and struggle.

Shayṭān tells someone who is on the path of fulfilling the needs of his brother in religion, "This action will cause you to become needy and destitute!" And if Shayṭān is not successful in preventing that person from helping, he tries—through his insinuations (*was-wasah*)—to make the person have expectations from his brother in return for his help, thus afflicting him with an ungodly intention. To get rid of these insinuations, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 302, no. 40.

مَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ مَا كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيه

If a person is on the path of fulfilling the needs of his Muslim brother, then God shall fulfil his needs for as long as he remains on this path. [i]

With this luminous saying, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) nullifies both types of Shayṭān's insinuations and considers God as being responsible to fulfil the needs of the one who helps. Clearly, God's favour is not always bestowed through unseen intervention, rather, His favours are normally bestowed on His servants through ordinary means. Just like God creates the motivation in a person's mind to ask for his faithful brother's help, He also creates the motivation in that brother to help him. [ii]

Negative Effects of Neglecting to Help Brothers in Faith

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

أَيُّمَا مُؤْمِنٍ مَنَعَ مُؤْمِناً شَيْئاً مِمَّا يَحْتَاجُ إِلَيْهِ وَ هُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ أَوْ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِهِ أَقَامَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مُسْوَدّاً وَجْهُهُ مُزْرَقَّةً عَيْنَاهُ مَغْلُولَةً يَدَاهُ إِلَى عُنُقِهِ فَيُقَالُ هَذَا الْخَائِنُ الَّذِي خَانَ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ ثُمَّ يُؤْمَرُ بِهِ إِلَى النَّار

Any believer who prevents another believer from something that he needs, while he had the ability to fulfil it either himself or through someone else, then he will be brought forth on the Day of Judgment in a state where his face is blackened, his eyes have come out of their sockets, and his hands are fettered to his neck [he cannot

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i. Ibid., vol. 71, p. 286, no. 11.

ii. Hence the one referred to in the narration, who is on the path of fulfilling the needs of his Muslim brother, should not refuse the help of a third party who wants to help him or give him a gift. (Ed.)

> do anything]. It will be said, "This is the betrayer who betrayed God and His Messenger." And then it shall be commanded that he be taken to the Hellfire.[i]

Of course, this tradition is regarding a person who did not fulfil the needs of a believer despite being attentive to these matters. However, if it was due to being oblivious, then the bad effects of it shall not be directed to him.

6. Going to Perform the Ziyārah of the Infallibles (peace be upon Them)

The Importance of the Ziyārah of the Infallibles

The *ziyārah* of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) has a special place and importance for the believers and those who love them. The believers should—in order to resolve their problems and for the freshness of their souls—find a way to perform the pilgrimage, to the extent of their financial capabilities. They must seek such an opportunity, not that they just wait for the opportunity to present itself, because many traditions have been narrated regarding the importance and virtues of the *ziyārah* of the Infallibles (peace be upon them). Among them is the tradition in which Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) says:

> مَنْ زَارَنِي عَلَى بُعْدِ دَارِي وَ شُطُونِ مَزَارِي أَتَيْتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي ثَلَاثِ مَوَاطِنَ حَتَّى أُخَلِّصَهُ مِنْ أَهْوَالِهَا إِذَا تَطَايَرَتِ الْكُتُبُ يَمِيناً وَ شِمَالًا وَ عِنْدَ الصِّرَاطِ وَ عِنْدَ الْمِيزَانِ
>
> If a person performs my *ziyārah* despite the remoteness of my house and shrine, I will come to him on the Day of Judgment at three places until I save him from the fears of those places: when the books are scattered to the right and left [the scrolls of deeds are handed out], at the *ṣirāṭ*

i. al-Barqī, *Al-maḥāsin*, vol. 1, p. 100, no. 71.

[the bridge over the Hellfire] and when he is at the *mīzān* [the scale for weighing deeds].[i]

This noble tradition indicates that if a believer's relationship with the Imams (peace be upon them) remains intact till the Day of Judgment, he shall attain their intercession (*shafā'ah*) and be saved from the difficulties of the Day of Judgment, even if this relationship is weak. This is particularly the case with Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him), because accepting his *wilāyah* indicates the acceptance of the *wilāyah* of all the Imams.

Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) said to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), "What is the reward of the person who visits you?" The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

يَا بُنَيَّ مَنْ زَارَنِي حَيّاً أَوْ مَيِّتاً أَوْ زَارَ أَبَاكَ أَوْ زَارَ أَخَاكَ أَوْ زَارَكَ كَانَ حَقّاً عَلَيَّ أَنْ أَزُورَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ أُخَلِّصَهُ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ

My dear son! Whoever visits me during my lifetime or after my demise, or if he visits your father, your brother or you, then it is obligatory on me that I visit him on the Day of Judgment and save him from his sins.[ii]

The Reality of the Ziyārah of the Awliyā' of Allah

There is a special connection between the souls of the Imams (peace be upon them) and their pure bodies; a special Divine grace is present around their graves. Thus, we have been advised to visit their pure graves to develop a connection with Allah. Furthermore, performing the *ziyārah* of the worthy servants of God, the *awliyā'* of Allah, or even the believers, strengthens one's relationship with God. For this reason, the *ziyārah* of the House of God—even though it is an obligatory action—becomes complete by performing the *ziyārah* of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). As per the saying of Imam

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i. Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 304, no. 4.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 577, no. 3159.

al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), the *ziyārah* of the Imam is a part of the complete Hajj.[1] That is why pilgrims of the House of God perform the *ziyārah* of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and the Imams (peace be upon them) buried in Baqīʿ, after completing their Hajj rituals.

Performing the *ziyārah* of the Imams (peace be upon them) is one of the responsibilities of the believers. In this regard there is no difference between whether they are present or in *ghaybah* (occultation), and whether they are alive or have been martyred. One of the effects of performing their *ziyārah* is an increase in one's attention towards Allah, towards the eventual meeting with Allah, and an increased inclination towards Allah. Such effects come from *ziyārah* of the Imams' (peace be upon them) graves, even during the time of the ghaybah and their martyrdom. One must not say, "What is the use of visiting a building (the sacred haram) or a grave?!" The House of God is also a building, but no Muslim considers visiting it and moving towards it as being *shirk* (polytheism), because it is a place where attention towards God is realized. For this same reason, the *ziyārah* of the shrine of the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) is neither *shirk* nor is it prohibited, rather it is one of the highly recommended acts. Every effort that is spent to go for *ziyārah* has abundant rewards, because these places are the means of increasing one's attention towards God and the places where Divine mercy and forgiveness descend.

Etiquettes of the Ziyārah

For the *ziyārah* to have the effects that were mentioned, a person must first have correct and worthy objectives for it and at the next

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 97, p. 139, no. 1.

إِذَا حَجَّ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَخْتِمْ حَجَّهُ بِزِيَارَتِنَا لِأَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ تَمَامِ الْحَجِ

Whenever one of you performs the Hajj, then he should complete his Hajj by performing our pilgrimage because it is a part of the complete Hajj.

stage, he must ensure that the means and path that he chooses to make the *ziyārah* must be desirable and permissible.[i] In this way he can attain the real objective of the *ziyārah*. For this reason, a person must always be vigilant and attentive regarding the steps he takes, because the more he is attentive towards the reality of the *ziyārah*, the more he acquires its special blessings.

An important point regarding *ziyārah* is to be attentive towards the personality whose shrine is being visited. On the path of the *ziyārah*, giving independent attention to affairs such as resting, recreation, or associating with friends and others in such a way that prevents a person from the objective of *ziyārah*, is not desirable.

If one was unable to perform the *ziyārah* of the graves of the Imams (peace be upon them), he should not be negligent about the spiritual journey of the heart, even though the spiritual journey is more difficult and has more obstacles, and in fact the outward travel is a preliminary for this inner, spiritual journey. It is possible that a person travels outwardly but his heart does not travel. One of the students of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said to him near the House of God, "How many pilgrims are here!" The Imam (peace be upon him) said:

مَا أَكْثَرَ الضَّجِيجَ وَ أَقَلَّ الْحَجِيج

> How many are there who wail and cry! And how few are the real pilgrims of Hajj![ii]

It is clear that their body had performed an outward journey, but their hearts had not travelled.

7. Moving to Perform the Ziyārah of the Imams' Descendants

In traditions there is a general recommendation for performing the *ziyārah* of the Imams' descendants, hence we must not be negligent

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i. For example, if it is incumbent on him to stay home and attend to his family then he cannot leave them to go and perform the *ziyārah*. (Ed.)

ii. al-Maghribī, *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 78.

of this.[i] From among the descendants of the Imams, the *ziyārah* of some are more emphasized and recommended such as Sayyidah Fātimah al-Maʿṣūmah (peace be upon her). Imam al-Jawād (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ زَارَ قَبْرَ عَمَّتِي بِقُمَّ فَلَهُ الْجَنَّة

Whoever visits the grave of my paternal aunt in Qom, then for him is Paradise.[ii]

Among the other descendants of Imams whose *ziyārah* is advised is Sayyid ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Ḥasanī (peace be upon him). Imam al-Hādī (peace be upon him) said to a person from the city of Rayy:

أَمَا إِنَّكَ لَوْ زُرْتَ قَبْرَ عَبْدِ الْعَظِيمِ عِنْدَكُمْ لَكُنْتَ كَمَنْ زَارَ الْحُسَيْنَ ع

Verily if you visit the grave of ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm which is in your vicinity, then it is as if you have visited al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him).[iii]

The great religious personalities have given special importance to the *ziyārah* of the Imams' descendants because every one of them had a special connection with God and because they are a cause of a person attaining proximity to God and the fulfilment of his supplications.

8. Moving to Visit the Graveyard

One of the human being's religious responsibilities is to visit the graveyard. This action is beneficial for the deceased as well as for the visitor. It is true that the human body decays after death and is lost, but due to the connection that was there between the soul and the

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i. In Persian, these descendants are known as the *Imāmzādigān*, the singular of which is *Imāmzāde*. (Ed.)

ii. Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 324, no. 2.

iii. Ibid., p. 324, no. 1.

body, and also due to his faith, the grave of a believer maintains a special significance. Thus, we have been advised to go there and visit them. Essentially, when a person leaves this world, his understanding and comprehension expands and he benefits from those who attend his funeral procession, those who come visit his grave, and those who gift good deeds to him.[i] Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

زُورُوا مَوْتَاكُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَفْرَحُونَ بِزِيَارَتِكُم

Visit your dead as they are pleased due to your visiting.[ii]

He also says:

وَ لْيَطْلُبْ أَحَدُكُمْ حَاجَتَهُ عِنْدَ قَبْرِ أَبِيهِ وَ عِنْدَ قَبْرِ أُمِّهِ بِمَا يَدْعُو لَهُمَا

Every one of you should ask for the fulfilment of his needs by the grave of his father and mother, after he has supplicated for them.[iii]

Parents are the apparent intermediaries between a person and Allah, and they have a special status. A person must benefit from the blessing of his parents as much as possible, make them happy and ask them to pray for him. Sometimes a child becomes *ʿāq* after the demise of his parents because he forgets their efforts and services to him and does not send any gifts and good deeds for them. This is because a person's need only increases after his death and thus others

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 73, no. 1765; Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 319, no. 2; al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 9, p. 476, no. 3.

مَنْ لَمْ يَقْدِرْعَلَى زِيَارَتِنَا فَلْيَزُرْ صَالِحِي مَوَالِينَا يُكْتَبْ لَهُ ثَوَابُ زِيَارَتِنَا

If a person does not have ability to visit us, then he should go to visit the righteous ones from among our *mawālī* (those who have the bond of *wilāyah* with us). By doing so, the reward of visiting us will be written for him.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 229, no. 10; al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 3, p. 223, no. 5.

iii. Ibid.

should be more attentive to them after their death. Our teacher[i] used to say:

> I used to perform a specific action for the deceased. One night, I saw my father and the other great personalities for whom I used to send that [action to, as a] gift. My father exclaimed, "Why are you idle?!" I jumped out of my sleep and understood that I have forgotten to perform the action that I was continually doing for them.

9. Going to the Masjid

Among the other responsibilities of the legs is to go to the masjid. Even though one can develop a connection with God at every place and time, some places and times are emphasized more for this purpose. The masjid is one of the places which has been recommended for developing a connection with God. It is mentioned in the Noble Qur'ān:

> إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
>
> Only those shall maintain Allah's masjids who believe in Allah and the Last Day. (9:18)

There are many religious commandments in the *sharī'ah* that result in the concentration of a person and focus his attention on the unseen realm. Therefore, to acquire concentration, we do not need the commandments and recommendations of secular schools of thought, because such concentration is acquired by a person through correctly performing worship. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

> عَلَيْكُمْ بِإِتْيَانِ الْمَسَاجِدِ فَإِنَّهَا بُيُوتُ اللَّهِ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَ مَنْ أَتَاهَا مُتَطَهِّراً طَهَّرَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ وَ كُتِبَ مِنْ زُوَّارِهِ فَأَكْثِرُوا فِيهَا مِنَ

i. Apparently, a reference to the late mystic and the eminent teacher of *akhlāq*, Āyatullāh 'Alī Sa'ādatparwar (may Allah elevate his status). (Ed.)

الصَّلَاةِ وَ الدُّعَاءِ وَ صَلُّوا مِنَ الْمَسَاجِدِ فِي بِقَاعٍ مُخْتَلِفَةٍ فَإِنَّ كُلَّ بُقْعَةٍ تَشْهَدُ لِلْمُصَلِّي عَلَيْهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَة

It is [incumbent] on you to come to the masjids because they are the houses of Allah on the earth and whoever enters them with purity, Allah purifies him from his sins and counts him among His visitors. Pray and supplicate in them abundantly. And pray at different spots within the masjids as every place will bear witness for the one who prays on it, on the Day of Judgment. [i]

Perhaps the reason behind the legislation of the qiblah is to develop more concentration as well. Even though Allah is not limited to any place or time, [ii] He has designated a specific point to be the focus of attention during acts of worship, so that a person can concentrate during worship by paying attention to that point. Likewise, it is for this reason that much emphasis has been placed on building masjids, going to them, and designating a place for worship and prayers in one's house. Such places act as an appropriate means to increase a person's concentration towards the unseen realm; the fruits of worship in such places come about quicker.

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said to Abū Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُعْطِيكَ مَا دُمْتَ جَالِساً فِي الْمَسْجِدِ بِكُلِّ نَفَسٍ تَنَفَّسْتَ فِيهِ دَرَجَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَ تُصَلِّي عَلَيْكَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَ يُكْتَبُ لَكَ بِكُلِّ نَفَسٍ تَنَفَّسْتَ فِيهِ عَشْرُ حَسَنَاتٍ وَ يُمْحَى عَنْكَ عَشْرُ سَيِّئَات

O Abū Dharr! As long as you are sitting in the masjid, Allah the Exalted grants you a level in Paradise for every breath you take, and the angels send blessings on you and

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-amālī*, p. 358, no. 8.

ii. Qur'ān 2:115.

> write ten good deeds for every breath and erase ten sins from you [from your scroll of deeds].[i]

The Etiquette of the Masjid

The masjid is a place of connecting with and being attentive to the true Imam.[ii] Unto this end, specific laws and *akhlāqī* rulings have been mentioned in the *sharī'ah* regarding it. According to a tradition, when Abū Dharr asked the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) about what makes the masjids flourish, he replied:

> لَا يُرْفَعُ فِيهَا الْأَصْوَاتُ وَ لَا يُخَاضُ فِيهَا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَ لَا يُشْتَرَى فِيهَا وَ لَا يُبَاعُ فَاتْرُكِ اللَّغْوَ مَا دُمْتَ فِيهَا فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَلَا تَلُومَنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِلَّا نَفْسَك
>
> [The masjids flourish when] voices are not raised, invalid and futile words are not uttered, and that buying and selling does not happen therein. Therefore, do not perform futile actions while you are there, and if you do abide by this [advice], then on the Day of Judgment you will have nobody to blame but yourself.[iii]

The masjid is a place of connecting with God. Thus, one should refrain from indulging in futile and vain things therein as these do not have any benefit in this world or the hereafter and they cause a person to be oblivious of God's remembrance. Whenever acts of worship and recommended actions are performed while observing the correct etiquette and refraining from futile actions, the mind and thoughts of a person are directed to specifically focus on Allah. In this way, the soul and heart of a person acquire specific levels of

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i. al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 567.

ii. The Imam is the leader of the Muslim community, and their political and spiritual base wherein they gather is the masjid. (Ed.)

iii. al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 567.

softness and purity, which then paves the way for attaining visions of the heart.

10. Going to Give Testimony

One of the rights of a person's legs is to go and be a witness to an event when asked to do so and then to go to court to bear witness regarding the event or regarding a dispute that he witnessed. The holy *sharī'ah* considers this kind of testimony, which is performed to establish a believer's right or to prove an accusation as being false, as obligatory. A believer must not refrain from giving such testimony.[i]

The jurisprudential laws pertaining to such testimony have been mentioned in the books of Islamic law of the *marāji'*. Here, we intend to mention their *akhlāqī* aspects. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

> مَنْ شَهِدَ شَهَادَةَ حَقٍّ لِيُحْيِيَ بِهَا حَقَّ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ أَتَى يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ لِوَجْهِهِ نُورٌ مَدَّ الْبَصَرِ تَعْرِفُهُ الْخَلَائِقُ بِاسْمِهِ وَ نَسَبِهِ
>
> Whosoever gives a truthful testimony to enliven [affirm] a Muslim's right, then on the Day of Judgment he shall come in such a state that his face is illuminated with light that extends as far as the eye can see, and the people will recognize him by his name and lineage.[ii]

A person has responsibilities towards others. Therefore, when someone requests another to cooperate by listening to a dispute or witnessing an event take place so that he can later bear witness in court, is it fair that he does not accept this request? Doing so causes a believer's right to be disregarded.

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i. Qur'ān 2:282.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 7, p. 381, no. 1.

11. Travelling

One of the recommended responsibilities which is performed by the legs is travelling. A journey which is for the sake of carrying out the commandments of God and to fulfil the physical and spiritual needs of a person, is praiseworthy. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

سَافِرُوا تَصِحُّوا سَافِرُوا تَغْنَمُوا

Travel and you shall be healthy. Travel and you shall derive benefits. [i]

Travelling can be disliked or even prohibited due to the intentions behind it and its characteristics. Prohibited journeys have their own rulings in the *sharī'ah* such as not shortening one's prayers. However, if a person had a prohibited intention at the onset of his journey but during the journey he changes his intention, then the prohibition is lifted.

The Etiquette of Travelling

Islam has mentioned various etiquettes for travelling that show its importance. Some of those etiquettes are as follows:

1. Charity (Ṣadaqah)

It is recommended to begin travel with giving charity. [ii]

2. Travelling Together

Travelling individually and alone is disliked. [iii]

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i. al-Barqī, *Al-maḥāsin*, vol. 2, p. 345, no. 1; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 73, p. 221, no. 2.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 97, p. 103, no. 5.

افْتَتِحْ سَفَرَكَ بِالصَّدَقَة

Begin your travel with *ṣadaqah*.

iii. Ibid., vol. 73, p. 267, no 8.

الرَّفِيقَ ثُمَّ الطَّرِيق

3. Refraining from Imposing One's Own Opinion

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) has narrated a tradition regarding the admonitions of Luqmān to his son, saying that when people go on a journey together, it is good that nobody imposes their own view, but rather that they head out while seeking counsel and thinking collectively:

إِذَا سَافَرْتَ مَعَ قَوْمٍ فَأَكْثِرِ اسْتِشَارَتَكَ إِيَّاهُمْ فِي أَمْرِكَ وَ أُمُورِهِم

Whenever you travel with people, you should seek their advice a lot regarding your affairs and their affairs...[i]

One of the things that prepare the grounds for self-building is travelling. In a journey, apart from finding good friends and testing the justice and credibility of people, one can also learn about the self-centeredness of oneself and other people. Seeking counsel regarding different matters on the journey and acting on it prevents one from imposing their own opinions and is a good way to strengthen one's intellect, thought, and knowledge. However, this does not mean that a person should use the opinions of others in every matter and not benefit from their own thoughts and views. Rather, they should first employ their own thought and then if they can't find a solution, they can then take assistance from others.

4. Generosity

In the continuation of the admonition of Luqmān regarding travelling, as narrated by Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), it says:

وَ كُنْ كَرِيماً عَلَى زَادِكَ

Share your provisions generously [in such a way that you do not mind others using it].[ii]

Of course, everyone should be like this in their own way. It should

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First [get] a friend [companion] then [take] the path [of a journey].

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 348, no. 547.

ii. Ibid.

not be that some people don't bring provisions and just takes advantage of others, considering that to be cleverness!

5. Helping Fellow Travellers

In continuation he says:

وَ إِذَا دَعَوْكَ فَأَجِبْهُمْ وَ إِذَا اسْتَعَانُوا بِكَ فَأَعِنْهُم

Whenever they call you, answer them. And whenever they ask your help, help them. (i)

6. Being Accommodating and Cheerful

One of the things that must be observed during a journey is to have an accommodating and cheerful attitude with fellow travellers. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

الْمُرُوَّةُ سِتٌّ ثَلَاثٌ فِي السَّفَرِ وَ ثَلَاثٌ فِي الْحَضَرِ ... أَمَّا الَّتِي فِي السَّفَرِ بَذْلُ الزَّادِ وَ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ وَ الْمُعَاشَرَةُ بِالْمَعْرُوف

Chivalry is six things, three during travelling and three when at home ... those which are in travelling are: giving one's provisions to others, being good-mannered, and associating with others as per the commandments of God. (ii)

The meaning of associating as per the commandments of God is to not oppose them in different matters such as the type of food or choosing a specific route. Acting in such a manner strengthens a person and shows the softness of his soul and his accommodating nature towards others. Being accommodating with others in permissible and *akhlāqī* matters and in social issues can be a good practice, because everyone is bound to encounter different social situations in their lives, such as during their marriage. If one has worked on

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i. Ibid.

ii. al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, vol. 1, p. 77.

developing an attitude of overlooking and compromise, then he can easily have an appropriate encounter with others and prevent his life from being distraught with challenges.

7. Forgiveness at the End of the Journey

The last point is that when we part ways with our fellow travellers, if there is any displeasure or indignation, we should forgive each other. And we should not tell others about the defects of our fellow travellers after our journey is complete because this action, apart from being prohibited, is also against chivalry.[i] Unless it is the case that they had an apparent and specific weak point, and they have no intention of fixing it. In this situation it is desirable to warn others from having a relationship with him, and in some cases, it may even be necessary to do so.

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 73, p. 266, no. 3 and 7.

الْمُرُوَّةُ فِي السَّفَرِ كَثْرَةُ الزَّادِ وَ طِيبُهُ وَ بَذْلُهُ لِمَنْ كَانَ مَعَكَ وَ كِتْمَانُكَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ سِرَّهُمْ بَعْدَ مُفَارَقَتِكَ إِيَّاهُمْ وَ كَثْرَةُ الْمِزَاحِ فِي غَيْرِ مَا يُسْخِطُ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said, "Chivalry on a trip is: taking plenty provisions, ensuring it is delicious, giving it to whoever is with you, hiding the secrets of the group after you have parted ways with them, and joking a lot other than that which angers Allah the Invincible and the Majestic."

لَيْسَ مِنَ الْمُرُوَّةِ أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ الرَّجُلُ بِمَا يَلْقَى فِي سَفَرِهِ مِنْ خَيْرٍ أَوْ شَر

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said, "It is not from chivalry that a person relates that which he encountered on his trip, be it good or bad."

7
THE RIGHT OF THE HAND

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ يَدِكَ فَأَنْ لَا تَبْسُطَهَا إِلَى مَا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ فَتَنَالَ بِمَا تَبْسُطُهَا إِلَيْهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعُقُوبَةَ فِي الْأَجَلِ وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ بِلِسَانِ اللَّائِمَةِ فِي الْعَاجِلِ وَ لَا تَقْبِضَهَا مِمَّا افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا وَ لَكِنْ تُوَقِّرَهَا بِقَبْضِهَا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ مِمَّا يَحِلُّ لَهَا وَ بَسْطِهَا إِلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ قَدْ عُقِلَتْ وَ شُرِّفَتْ فِي الْعَاجِلِ وَجَبَ لَهَا حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ فِي الْآجِلِ

And the right of your hand is that you do not extend it towards that which is forbidden to you because by doing so you shall earn Allah's punishment in the hereafter and people's reproach in this world, and that you do not prevent your hand from that which Allah has made obligatory for it. Rather, revere it by holding it back from many a permissible act and extending it towards many a recommended act. Thus, if your hand is forced to abstain and becomes honourable in this world, then it will definitely have a good reward in the hereafter. [i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 257.

THE FAITH SPECIFIC TO EVERY BODY PART

Every body part of a person has its own specific faith. Hence, it is possible that a person possesses a basic level of faith, but one of his body parts remains faithless. A person's body parts will not remain under his control forever; that same reality who controls all beings shall one day make these body parts speak. If a person does not accept the sin of that body part and denies it, then that same body part will become his enemy on the Day of Judgment and bear witness against him. The Noble Qur'ān says:

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

> Today We shall seal their mouths, and their hands shall speak to Us, and their feet shall bear witness concerning what they used to earn. (36:65)

The speaking of body parts on the Day of Judgment indicates that they have a sense and understanding separate from ours and a person will object to them when they speak:

وَقَالُوا لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا ۖ قَالُوا أَنطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

> They will say to their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?" They will say, "We were given speech by Allah, who gave speech to all things". (41:21)

When a person lives his life with this perspective, he develops a profound view regarding himself. It is for this reason that Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) mentions the duties of each body part separately, including both the legislative and *akhlāqī* responsibilities.

THE INFLUENCE OF ONE'S ACTIONS ON THE SOUL, AND VICE VERSA

Islam advises that certain actions be performed by one's own hands so that a person's existence is influenced by it and becomes illuminated. In the time of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), someone wrote in his will that the Prophet should distribute the sack of dates that he leaves behind, in charity. When the Prophet had distributed all the dates amongst needy individuals and only one rotten date was remaining at the bottom of the bag, he said to his companions:

> If this person had only given this rotten date in charity with his own hand, it would have been better than the sack of dates which I gave in charity for him.

From this saying it can be understood that there is a direct relationship between the luminosity of the righteous deeds performed by a person's body parts and the luminosity of a person's soul. Similarly, the unrighteous and dark deeds performed by a person's body parts have a direct relationship with the soul. A person's body parts are not senseless tools like those in the hands of a carpenter, rather they have a particular type of sense and understanding. This is because the soul has a connection with them and encompasses them; the soul influences the body parts and is also influenced by them. For this reason, before giving money to the poor as charity (*ṣadaqah*), Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) used to kiss the beggar's hand and smell the money and then give it to him. When he was asked about the reason behind this, he said:

> لِأَنَّهَا تَقَعُ فِي يَدِ اللَّهِ قَبْلَ يَدِ الْعَبْدِ
>
> Because it [the charity] first reaches God's hands and then the hands of the servant.[i]

i. al-Bahrānī, *Tafsīr al-burhān*, vol. 2, p. 838.

DESIRABLE ACTIONS OF THE HAND

In Islam, the actions of a person's hand can be regarded to be of two types: positive (obligatory and recommended) or negative (forbidden and disliked). With regards to the positive actions of the hands, the following instances can be listed:

1) Shaking hands
2) Spending in the way of Allah and giving charity
3) Writing letters to relatives and friends
4) Caressing the head of orphans, relatives, etc
5) Performing jihad with one's hands
6) Signing different types of affidavits
7) Writing the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them)
8) Learning and teaching with one's hands
9) Paying allegiance to a rightful ruler
10) Exerting efforts to acquire permissible sustenance
11) Every type of service to others (for example maintaining the house)
12) Planting trees

Below we will briefly explain some of the most important and desirable actions of hands.

1. Being of Service to Others Through Writing

A person can make use of the moments of his life in a desirable way. For example, he can be of service to others by writing a letter and solving their problems. The Imams (peace be upon them) at times assisted people in this way, and the following narration is an example of it:

> ʿAlī ibn Ṭāhir al-Ṣūrī narrates from a man from the city of Rayy, that he said: One of the writers of Yaḥyā ibn Khālid became the governor of Rayy. At that time, I owed some taxes to the government, and I feared that they would compel me to pay those taxes and that would result in me losing everything I had. In that situation, I came to know that he was a Shīʿah. I was scared to go to him because if

what they said [about him being a Shī'ah] was not true, then I would have put myself in trouble. Eventually, I decided to run away and go to Allah [the House of Allah in Makkah]. I went for the Hajj and then visited Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him) and told him about my situation. The Imam wrote a letter to him with the following content:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ اعْلَمْ أَنَّ لِلَّهِ تَحْتَ عَرْشِهِ ظِلًّا لَا يَسْكُنُهُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَسْدَى إِلَى أَخِيهِ مَعْرُوفاً أَوْ نَفَّسَ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً أَوْ أَدْخَلَ عَلَى قَلْبِهِ سُرُوراً وَ هَذَا أَخُوكَ وَ السَّلَام

"In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent the All-merciful. Know that verily Allah has a shade under His Throne that none shall reside under except the one who does good to his brother in religion, or removes a sorrow from him, or makes him happy. And this [bearer of the letter] is your brother in religion. *Wassalām*."

I returned from Hajj and entered my city. At night, I went to his house and asked for permission to enter saying, "Tell him that a messenger from the Imam is here." I saw him coming out barefooted. He opened the door, kissed me, and embraced me and continuously kissed my forehead, asking me again and again, "Did you yourself see my master? How is he?" And when I informed him of his good health, he became pleased and thanked Allah. Then he brought me inside his house and made me sit at the front of the room and he sat facing me. I gave him the letter; he kissed it and read it. He then commanded that his clothes and savings be brought. He divided all his money with me, one dinar for me and one for him, one dirham for him and one for me. In the same way he divided his clothes as well, and that which could not be divided, he paid its price to me and was continuously asking, "Brother! Have I made you happy?" I was saying, "Yes, by God I am very happy." Then he called for the

record of tax debts to be brought and erased whatever was under my name in it, and he gave a written assurance that I owe nothing at all. Then I bade him farewell and returned to my house. I said to myself that I cannot recompense his goodness and love towards me unless I go to Hajj next year, pray for him, and meet with Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him) and tell him what he did for me. And so, I did just that. When I went to Mūsā ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him) and recounted to him what happened, I saw that he was continuously becoming happier. I said, "My master! Have you too become happy?" He said:

إِي وَ اللّٰهِ لَقَدْ سَرَّنِي وَ سَرَّ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ اللّٰهِ لَقَدْ سَرَّ جَدِّي رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ ص وَ لَقَدْ سَرَّ اللّٰهَ تَعَالَى

"Yes, by Allah! Indeed, he made me happy, and he made Amīr al-Mu'minīn happy. By Allah! Indeed, he made my grandfather the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) happy and he made Allah the Exalted happy."[i]

2. Writing Religious Teachings

One of the activities of the hands is to write and author works. In the words of Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him):

كِتَابُ الرَّجُلِ عُنْوَانُ عَقْلِهِ وَ بُرْهَانُ فَضْلِهِ

What a person writes is a sign of his intellect and proof of his virtue.[ii]

The more that knowledge is accompanied with writing, the better it is preserved and the more permanent it becomes in the soul. Due to different reasons, most people's memories are prone to being afflicted with forgetfulness. Hence, for the purpose of protecting and preserving what is memorized, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 48, p. 174, no. 16.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 540, no. 41.

him) says:

اكْتُبُوا فَإِنَّكُمْ لَا تَحْفَظُونَ حَتَّى تَكْتُبُوا

Write because you will not memorize unless you write.[i]

Regarding the spiritual effects of writing, the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

الْمُؤْمِنُ إِذَا مَاتَ وَ تَرَكَ وَرَقَةً وَاحِدَةً عَلَيْهَا عِلْمٌ تَكُونُ تِلْكَ الْوَرَقَةُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ سِتْراً فِيمَا بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ النَّارِ وَ أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى بِكُلِّ حَرْفٍ مَكْتُوبٍ عَلَيْهَا مَدِينَةً أَوْسَعَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ

When a believer dies and leaves behind a single page containing knowledge, then that page acts as a veil on the Day of Judgment between that person and the Hellfire. And for every letter written upon it, Allah (the Provider of abundance and the Sublime) grants him a city that is seven times bigger than the world.[ii]

The meaning of knowledge in such traditions encompasses more than just religious and Divine knowledge such as the fields of intellectual, theological, *akhlāq* and jurisprudential knowledge. Those empirical sciences that are used in a manner such that human beings and especially believers can benefit and improve their worldly life, or in a manner that somehow strengthens the foundations of religion, are also counted among the fields of Divine knowledge. Such traditions include these empirical sciences as well. However, with the condition that seeking such knowledge should be with a sincere intention, not to acquire a title and position or to amass wealth.

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 52, no. 9.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-amālī*, p. 37, no. 3.

NEGATIVE ACTIONS OF THE HAND

1) Hitting unjustly
2) Usurping and stealing
3) Cracking one's knuckles
4) Writing deviating matters
5) Cooperating with oppressors
6) Backbiting with one's hands

Some of the negative actions of hands are specifically mentioned in the context of prohibited or obligatory actions, and therefore have a higher level of importance. Keeping that in mind, the following is the explanation of some of these important negative actions of the hands.

1. Stealing

One of the prohibited actions of the hands which indicates an attitude of transgressing the rights of others, is stealing. Stealing is either directly performed such as stealing people's belongings, or indirectly such as misappropriating money through the banking system without the knowledge of its owners and illegally taking possession of that money's profits. In either case, stealing has specific rulings in the *sharī'ah*, both *taklīfī* and *wad'ī* rulings.[i] As per a tradition, as newer and more complicated forms of impermissible actions come about, society is afflicted with more complicated and newer problems.[ii] In the twentieth century people have been afflicted with

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i. *Taklīfī* refers to the one of the five categories of being obligatory, recommended, forbidden, disliked or permissible. In this context of course stealing would be forbidden. *Waḍ'ī* refers to the validity or invalidity of the transaction or the transfer of wealth that apparently transpired, e.g., is the money even owned by the one who misappropriated it? (Ed.)

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 70, p. 343, no. 26.

كُلَّمَا أَحْدَثَ الْعِبَادُ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَعْمَلُونَ أَحْدَثَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مِنَ الْبَلَاءِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَعْرِفُونَ

Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) says, "Whenever the servants of Allah bring forth new forms of sin that they were not committing earlier, Allah brings forth

psychological and physical afflictions and illnesses to such an extent that sometimes they are not able to cure them, whereas such illnesses were not there in the past. The Noble Qur'ān says:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

> Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of the doings of the people's hands, that He may make them taste something of what they have done, so that they may come back. (30:41)

2. Helping the Oppressors

Someone who works for an oppressor to reach his own desires and implements the oppressor's wrongful orders, has actually made himself a partner in many of the crimes committed by the oppressor and the blood he sheds. Such a person, on account of the notion that it is his boss who provides him sustenance, justifies his actions by saying, "If I do not do this then I will be unemployed and will lose my sustenance." The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ نَادَى مُنَادٍ أَيْنَ الظَّلَمَةُ وَ أَعْوَانُهُمْ مَنْ لَاقَ لَهُمْ دَوَاةً أَوْ رَبَطَ لَهُمْ كِيساً أَوْ مَدَّ لَهُمْ مَدَّةَ قَلَمٍ فَاحْشُرُوهُمْ مَعَهُم

> On the Day of Judgment, a crier shall cry out, "Where are the oppressors and those who assisted them? [They are] those who put *līqah* [a substance used in inkpots to prepare them for writing] in the inkpot for the oppressors, tied a bag for them, or sharpened a pen for them. So, gather them along with the oppressors."[i]

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new forms of affliction for them, that they did not know of earlier."

i. Ibid., vol. 72, p. 372, no. 17.

3. Writing Deviating Matters

Writing deviating matters is prohibited because it produces bad consequences for the writer as well as the reader, and it is a cause of innovation (*bid'ah*) in religion. Its sin is not easily forgiven, not unless those who were misguided are returned to the path of truth, which of course is very difficult. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

مَنْ سَنَّ سُنَّةً سَيِّئَةً كَانَ عَلَيْهِ وِزْرُهَا وَ وِزْرُ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

> If a person initiates a bad custom (*sunnah*), then its burden and the burden of everyone who acts upon it till the Day of Judgment shall be on him.[i]

4. Backbiting with One's Hands

Just as how a person can backbite using his tongue, he can also perform this sin by using hand gestures to imply a message. It has been narrated from 'Ā'ishah that she said:

دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْنَا امْرَأَةٌ فَلَمَّا وَلَّتْ أَوْمَأْتُ بِيَدِي أَنَّهَا قَصِيرَةٌ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ ص قَدِ اغْتَبْتِهَا وَ نَهَانِي عَنْ مِثْلِ ذَلِكَ

> A woman came to us and when she turned around to leave, I indicated with my hands that she was short. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "You have backbit her!" And he prohibited me from doing that again.'[ii]

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i. al-Mufīd, *Al-fuṣūl al-mukhtārah*, p. 136.

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 1, p. 118.

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THE RIGHT OF THE STOMACH

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ بَطْنِكَ فَأَنْ لَا تَجْعَلَهُ وِعَاءً لِقَلِيلٍ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ وَ لَا لِكَثِيرٍ وَ أَنْ تَقْتَصِدَ لَهُ فِي الْحَلَالِ وَ لَا تُخْرِجَهُ مِنْ حَدِّ التَّقْوِيَةِ إِلَى حَدِّ التَّهْوِينِ وَ ذَهَابِ الْمُرُوَّةِ وَ ضَبْطُهُ إِذَا هَمَّ بِالْجُوعِ وَ الظَّمَإِ فَإِنَّ الشِّبَعَ الْمُنْتَهِيَ بِصَاحِبِهِ إِلَى التُّخَمِ مَكْسَلَةٌ وَ مَثْبَطَةٌ وَ مَقْطَعَةٌ عَنْ كُلِّ بِرٍّ وَ كَرَمٍ وَ إِنَّ الرَّيَّ الْمُنْتَهِيَ بِصَاحِبِهِ إِلَى السُّكْرِ مَسْخَفَةٌ وَ مَجْهَلَةٌ وَ مَذْهَبَةٌ لِلْمُرُوَّةِ

And the right of your stomach is that you do not make it a vessel for that which is forbidden, be it a little or a lot. And that you be moderate regarding that which is permissible, and that you do not make it fall from the level of strengthening to the level of causing contempt and a loss of chivalry, and that you control it when it is restless and distressed due to hunger and thirst. For verily, the satiation from hunger which leads to indigestion causes lethargy, fatigue, and the abandonment of all righteous deeds and nobility, and the satiation from thirst which leads to the stomach bloating with water

causes imprudence, ignorance, and the abandonment of chivalry.[i]

THE NECESSITY OF BEING ATTENTIVE TO THE OBSTACLES OF THE SOUL'S PERFECTION

Man must always compare himself to the principles and commandments of the holy *sharī'ah* and determine the extent to which he is following those commandments in his life, and the extent to which he has acquired the results of following them. If he has not acquired those effects, then it is clear that there is some obstacle that must be identified and removed in order to attain the desired results. Among the biggest obstacles on the path towards the soul's perfection is to perform that which is prohibited by God. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

إِذَا رَغِبْتَ فِي الْمَكَارِمِ فَاجْتَنِبِ الْمَحَارِمِ

If you seek to acquire honourable moral traits, then refrain from prohibited actions.[ii]

From this saying it can be understood that if a person's intellect is utilized correctly and if it pursues those realities that are befitting to its existence, then it will recognize the obstacles on the path to its perfection and remove them.

Among the religious commandments are those about managing the stomach. In this section, we will first focus on the prohibitions related to the stomach and then the permissible matters. In the end, we will mention the balanced extent of utilizing these permissible matters.

THE INNER EFFECTS OF A PROHIBITED MORSEL

Every ugly and righteous action has a *malakūtī* dimension as well as a worldly dimension. The worldly dimension is lost with death

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 258.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Tasnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 317, no. 7317.

while the *malakūtī* dimension remains with the soul, which itself belongs to the world of *malakūt*. This is the case, unless it was an ugly action that the individual repented for. A prohibited morsel of food is such; every prohibited morsel leaves a negative influence on a person's soul. Every sin prepares a person for the Hellfire. If it continues and the person does not repent, then it causes him to be thrown into the Hellfire. As per the teachings of the Noble Qur'ān, one who consumes prohibited things has in reality poured fire into his stomach, but he does not comprehend this.

The Noble Qur'ān says the following regarding consuming the wealth of orphans:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ۖ وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا

> Indeed, those who consume the property of orphans wrongfully, [in reality they] only ingest fire into their bellies, and soon they will enter the Blaze. (4:10)

As a result of committing sin, such individuals are treading a path on which they are acquiring veils of darkness. They do not comprehend the consequence of consuming these prohibited possessions and do not feel the fire, but when they leave this world and enter the grave, the world of *barzakh*, and the resurrection, they shall comprehend it and shall be engulfed in the fire. In fact, the fire of the resurrection is nothing but the manifestation of the inner forms of one's actions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFRAINING FROM A PROHIBITED MORSEL

Some Muslims used to participate in the congregational prayers behind Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) but on the other hand they would also be present at the banquets of Mu'āwiyah. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says regarding this group of people:

الْعِبَادَةُ مَعَ أَكْلِ الْحَرَامِ كَالْبِنَاءِ عَلَى الرَّمْلِ

Worship that is alongside the consumption of prohibited things is like building a structure on sand [it has no firmness and stability].[i]

Some people might easily perform recommended prayers but alongside that they also accept bribes or takes interest, unaware of the fact that good actions which do not have the backing of belief and faith in God, do not have an influence on a person's soul and do not yield any results. Allah says in the Noble Qur'ān:

وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَّنثُورًا

Then We shall attend to the works they have done and then turn them into scattered dust. (25:23)

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says the following regarding this verse:

أَمَا وَ اللَّهِ إِنْ كَانَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ أَشَدَّ بَيَاضاً مِنَ الْقَبَاطِيِّ وَ لَكِنْ كَانُوا إِذَا عَرَضَ لَهُمُ الْحَرَامُ لَمْ يَدَعُوهُ.

By Allah, even if their actions were whiter than a shirt made from Egyptian cotton, [God will command it to become dust, like the dust scattered around the land by the winds. This is because] whenever a prohibited action would present itself to them, they would not refrain from it.[ii]

Here, the Imam considers this verse to include believers who do not refrain from prohibited transactions such as accepting bribes, taking interest, unjustly using an orphan's possessions, usurping the possessions or rights of others, and consuming prohibited food. The good deeds of such individuals become ineffective, and if they

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i. al-Ḥillī, *'Uddah al-dā'ī*, p. 153.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 81, no. 5.

continue and do not halt their impermissible actions, then gradually their soul is transfigured, they cease to recognize that which they used to consider to be the truth, and eventually they trample on the limits set by God.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AMOUNT OF FOOD AND CHIVALRY

The righteous deeds of a person's body parts are not only the indicators of his faith in Allah, but they also strengthen and increase that faith. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if a person wants to lift some of the veils which are on his heart, then he must be attentive to the responsibilities of the stomach. That means that in addition to refraining from prohibited food, he must also refrain from doubtful food and overeating.[i] As is narrated in the teachings of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them), filling one's stomach with food and water causes a person to be lethargic and unhealthy and prevents him from performing righteous deeds.[ii] Thus it has been advised that one should not eat unless they are hungry, and one should stop eating before they are completely full. Similarly, one should refrain from drinking water in excess as it causes physical

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i. Doubtful food and more generally, doubtful wealth, is that wealth whose owner is a careless person. Neither is he aware of what is permissible and prohibited, nor does he care in which way he acquires his wealth. Also, his apparent behaviour is not in line with the behaviour of religious people.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 271.

وَ اعْلَمْ وَيْحَكَ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَّ قَسْوَةَ الْبِطْنَةِ وَ كِظَّةَ الْمِلْأَةِ وَ سُكْرَ الشِّبَعِ وَ غِرَّةَ الْمُلْكِ مِمَّا يُثَبِّطُ وَ يُبْطِئُ عَنِ الْعَمَلِ وَ يُنْسِي الذِّكْرَ وَ يُلْهِي عَنِ اقْتِرَابِ الْأَجَلِ

Imam al-Sajjād said, "... Woe be to you O son of Ādam! Know that the severity of gluttony, the gorging and filling of oneself, the drunkenness of satiation, and the deception of authority - all these matters cause laziness and tardiness from acting, make one forget the remembrance [of God], and divert from the imminence of death ..."

In addition to the above narration, this same section of the narration of *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* mentions some of the ill-effects of overeating. (Ed.)

and spiritual harm.[i]

Eating in excess causes a person's chivalry to vanish because after overeating, his attention towards observing upright moral standards decreases and it causes him to be reckless with respect to Divine rights. The meaning of chivalry (*muruwwah*) is that a person strives to maintain his own limits and the limits of those he is in contact with. Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) was asked about chivalry and he mentioned six affairs from the reality of chivalry:

حِفْظُ الدِّينِ وَ إِعْزَازُ النَّفْسِ وَ لِينُ الْكَنَفِ وَ تَعَهُّدُ الصَّنِيعَةِ وَ أَدَاءُ الْحُقُوقِ وَ التَّحَبُّبُ إِلَى النَّاس

> Protecting the religion, respecting the self, tenderness in character, persistent good deeds, fulfilling the rights [of others], and friendliness with the people.[ii]

THE NECESSITY OF MODERATION IN EATING

One whose primary concern is always his stomach will naturally seek those things that satisfy him. Such a person will be inattentive towards the rights of God and the rights of others. With regards to eating, a person must be moderate and also avoid the lower extreme of neglecting one's stomach. Someone who wants to study, engage in worship or in social activities, must consume permissible food to the necessary extent. One who cannot perform his activities and responsibilities due to not eating, eating too little, or performing excessive recommended fasts, is also not someone with whom God

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i. al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. 25, p. 238.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ: لَا تُكْثِرْ مِنْ شُرْبِ الْمَاءِ فَإِنَّهُ مَادَّةٌ لِكُلِّ دَاءٍ

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said, "Do not drink water excessively, for it is source of every sickness."

لَوْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ أَقَلُّوا مِنْ شُرْبِ الْمَاءِ لَاسْتَقَامَتْ أَبْدَانُهُم

If only a person would reduce his drinking of water, his body would be sound.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 225

is pleased. A clever person seeks to recognize his responsibilities and act on them. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

حَبَّذَا نَوْمُ الْأَكْيَاسِ وَ إِفْطَارُهُم

How good is the sleeping [as opposed to praying] and eating [as opposed to fasting] of the clever ones![i]

CONDEMNING OVEREATING AND ITS EFFECTS

Eating excessively leaves undesirable effects on a person's body and soul. On the one hand, one who normally overeats must exert more efforts than others. His body requires more food to fulfil his physical needs, resulting in self-indulgence. On the other hand, overeating results in hardness of the heart, stimulation of a person's lust, and lethargy in obeying God's commandments.[ii] The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَ فُضُولَ المَطْعَمِ فَإِنَّهُ يَسُمُّ الْقَلْبَ بِالْقَسْوَةِ وَ يُبْطِئُ بِالْجَوَارِحِ عَنِ الطَّاعَةِ وَ يَصُمُّ الْهِمَمَ عَنْ سَمَاعِ الْمَوْعِظَةِ

Refrain from overeating because it poisons the heart with hardness, makes the body parts slow in obeying Allah, and makes a person's lofty aspirations to be deaf from listening to admonition.[iii]

He also said:

لَا يَدْخُلُ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ مَنْ مَلَأَ بَطْنَه

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 145.

ii. al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, vol. 12, p. 94, no. 13615.

وَ لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَضَرَّ لِقَلْبِ الْمُؤْمِنِ مِنْ كَثْرَةِ الْأَكْلِ وَ هِيَ مُورِثَةٌ لِشَيْئَيْنِ قَسْوَةِ الْقَلْبِ وَ هَيَجَانِ الشَّهْوَة

There is nothing more harmful for a believer's heart than overeating and it brings about two effects: hardness of heart and stimulation of lust.

iii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 74, p. 182.

One who fills his stomach does not enter the *malakūt* of the heavens and the earth.[i]

MERITS OF EATING LESS AND ITS EFFECTS

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) mentions the criteria for eating with which one can understand the meaning of eating less:

كُلْ وَ أَنْتَ تَشْتَهِي وَ أَمْسِكْ وَ أَنْتَ تَشْتَهِي

Eat when you have the desire to eat and stop eating while you [still] have the desire to eat.[ii]

This criteria for eating less has many merits. On the night of mi'rāj, the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked Allah regarding the effects of hunger. Allah said:

الحِكْمَةُ وَ حِفْظُ الْقَلْبِ وَ التَّقَرُّبُ إِلَيَّ وَ الْحُزْنُ الدَّائِمُ وَ خِفَّةُ الْمَئُونَةِ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَ قَوْلُ الْحَقِّ وَ لَا يُبَالِي عَاشَ بِيُسْرٍ أَوْ بِعُسْرٍ

[Acquiring] wisdom [that is, realities become evident for a person], protection of the heart [a person's senses and thoughts are collected], proximity to Me, constant grief [concern about attaining real perfection], inexpensive living among people, truthful speech and [an attitude with which] the person does not care if he lives in ease or in difficulty.[iii]

ETIQUETTES OF EATING

On the path of servitude to Allah, a person makes use of everything that makes him closer to God. One of these things are abiding by the apparent and *akhlāqī* etiquettes of eating.

Some of these etiquettes are: taking God's name in the beginning

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i. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 1, p. 100.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 59, p. 290.

iii. al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, vol. 16, p. 219, no. 19647.

and at the end, and praising Him which results in never being questioned about that food.[i] Another example of etiquette is to wash one's hands before and after eating which causes blessings in one's food and keeps one's body safe from illness.[ii] Also, before starting to eat and after finishing, one should eat salt so that God repels from him three hundred and sixty types of afflictions, the least of which is leprosy.[iii]

Imam al-Ḥasan (peace be upon him) says:

فِي الْمَائِدَةِ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ خَصْلَةً يَجِبُ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ أَنْ يَعْرِفَهَا أَرْبَعٌ مِنْهَا فَرْضٌ وَ أَرْبَعٌ سُنَّةٌ وَ أَرْبَعٌ تَأْدِيبٌ فَأَمَّا الْفَرْضُ فَالْمَعْرِفَةُ وَ الرِّضَا وَ التَّسْمِيَةُ وَ الشُّكْرُ وَ أَمَّا السُّنَّةُ فَالْوُضُوءُ قَبْلَ الطَّعَامِ وَ الْجُلُوسُ عَلَى الْجَانِبِ الْأَيْسَرِ وَ الْأَكْلُ بِثَلَاثِ أَصَابِعَ وَ لَعْقُ الْأَصَابِعِ وَ أَمَّا التَّأْدِيبُ فَالْأَكْلُ مِمَّا يَلِيكَ وَ تَصْغِيرُ اللُّقْمَةِ وَ تَجْوِيدُ الْمَضْغِ وَ قِلَّةُ النَّظَرِ فِي وُجُوهِ النَّاسِ

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i. al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. 24, p. 349, no. 4.

مَنْ ذَكَرَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ لَمْ يُسْأَلْ عَنْ نَعِيمِ ذَلِكَ أَبَداً

Whoever mentions the name of Allah before [eating] food, will never be asked about its blessing.

ii. Ibid., vol. 24, pp. 335-336, no. 2 and 5.

الْوُضُوءُ قَبْلَ الطَّعَامِ وَ بَعْدَهُ يَزِيدَانِ فِي الرِّزْقِ

Washing one's hands before eating and after it, increases in one's sustenance.

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَكْثُرَ خَيْرُ بَيْتِهِ فَلْيَتَوَضَّأْ عِنْدَ حُضُورِ طَعَامِهِ

Whoever is happy that the goodness of their house increases, should wash his hands when the food is brought.

iii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 59, p. 293.

مَنْ أَكَلَ الْمِلْحَ قَبْلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ بَعْدَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ دَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ ثَلَاثَمِائَةٍ وَ سِتِّينَ نَوْعاً مِنَ الْبَلَاءِ أَهْوَنُهَا الْجُذَامُ

Whoever eats salt before anything and after anything, Allah repels three hundred and sixty types of afflictions from him, the least of which is leprosy.

There are twelve qualities for the time of eating which are necessary for every Muslim to know. Four of them are obligatory, four others are supererogatory and the remaining four are etiquettes. As for the obligatory ones, they are recognition [of Who it is that created it], satisfaction [with that which one has], taking Allah's name and gratefulness to Allah. As for the supererogatory ones, they are washing hands before food, sitting with the weight of the body on the left leg, eating with three fingers and licking the fingers [after eating the food with one's hands]. As for the etiquettes, they are eating that which is beside you, taking small morsels, chewing properly and not looking often at the face of [other] people.[i]

i. al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. 24, p. 336 and 431, no. 1.

9
THE RIGHT OF THE PRIVATE PARTS

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ فَرْجِكَ فَحِفْظُهُ مِمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَ الِاسْتِعَانَةُ عَلَيْهِ بِغَضِّ الْبَصَرِ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَعْوَنِ الْأَعْوَانِ وَ كَثْرَةِ ذِكْرِ الْمَوْتِ وَ التَّهَدُّدِ لِنَفْسِكَ بِاللَّهِ وَ التَّخْوِيفِ لَهَا بِهِ وَ بِاللَّهِ الْعِصْمَةُ وَ التَّأْيِيدُ وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِهِ

And the right of your private parts is that you protect them from that which is prohibited for you and seek help in this by casting down your gaze as it is among the best helpers. And [also] take help from abundant remembrance of death, and from threatening and frightening yourself [about the wrath] of God. And from Allah is the protection and help, and there is no power and strength except by Him.[i]

THE DIRECT ROLE OF LOOKING IN CORRUPTING THE PRIVATE PARTS

Being careful of each body part means to use it for permissible actions and make it abstain from that which is prohibited. Certain prohibitions that pertain to the private parts contain much wisdom

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 258.

in them, one of which is that the person's progeny remain pure. This the reason behind the prohibition of *zinā* as well as the prohibition of those illicit associations which lead to this filthy act. For indeed, one of the distinctions of the prophets and the *awliyā'* of Allah is that they attained their lofty station from a pure ancestry.

One of the ways to protect this body part, which is in fact equivalent to protecting a person's soul from impurity, is to control the faculty of sight. Thus, the Noble Qur'ān has commanded believing men and women to cast down their looks:

قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ

> Tell the faithful men to cast down their looks [from looking at a *non-maḥram*] and to guard their private parts. That is more decent for them. Allah is indeed well aware of what they do. And tell the faithful women to cast down their looks [from lustful glances]. (24:30-31)

The effect that looking has in corrupting a person's private parts is to such an extent that not only is it prohibited to look at a *non-maḥram*, but it is also prohibited to look at certain parts of the body of a mahram relative that can entice a person. As per some traditions, the worst body part of a person with regards to indulging in sin is the eye because it sins without making any noise. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَ فُضُولَ النَّظَرِ فَإِنَّهُ يَبْذُرُ الْهَوَى وَ يُوَلِّدُ الْغَفْلَة

> Refrain from futile looks because it sows the seed of lust and begets negligence.[i]

One of the things that prepare the grounds for the tranquillity of the heart and soul in different activities and especially in worship,

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 69, p. 199, no. 29.

is to control one's eyes. This is because controlling the eyes results in controlling the mental images that enter one's soul through the window of the eye.[i] Sometimes, the satanic images are so many in the mind of a weak soul, that they even trouble him during his sleep and cause irrelevant dreams that result in neurological problems.

THE NECESSITY OF MODERATION IN SEXUAL DESIRES

Allah has put the sexual desire in the human for lofty purposes and to attain those purposes, He has mentioned various responsibilities, including obligatory and prohibited, disliked and recommended, as well as *akhlāqī* responsibilities. Sometimes, certain sexual and spiritual problems can occur in a person if he is not attentive to the ethical responsibilities or disliked actions pertaining to the private parts and is also overpowered by sexual desires - even if they are fulfilled in a lawful manner. Reading certain books such as the noble book Ḥilyah al-muttaqīn is very beneficial in this regard.

The commandments of the holy *sharī'ah* in all dimensions of life have secrets, realities, and wisdoms behind them. The holy *sharī'ah* does not completely suppress the sexual desires of a person like some deviated religions, nor does it give it unlimited freedom like some western societies. This is because both these extremes bring about different undesirable effects on the individual and society. Such undesirable effects do not come about in societies which completely adhere to the commandments of the holy religion of Islam.

A person's approach regarding his private parts can be positive as well as negative. Among the positive instances of it are marriage, obedience of the wife towards her husband, and completely covering oneself from *non-maḥram* men. And among the negative instances of it are *zinā*, homosexuality, masturbation, and wearing inappropriate

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 368.

الْعَيْنُ بَرِيدُ الْقَلْبِ

The eye is the messenger of the heart

clothes.

WAYS TO CONTROL SEXUAL DESIRES

The holy *sharī'ah* has mentioned some ways to control this faculty in a person:

1. Not Looking at Areas that Entice

Attention must be paid to how the following factors all play a role in arousing a person's sexual desires: the way men and women interact in society, the clothes they wear, the imitating of Western fashions, and how people present themselves in a way that attracts the looks and attention of others. In addition, undesirable family relationships, intimacy and being friends with those who are *non-maḥram*, and filthy looks or conversations, all worsen this situation. One must pay special attention to their eyes, controlling them and repeatedly reminding themselves so that their soul remains in a state of sound faith. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ غَضَّ طَرْفَهُ أَرَاحَ قَلْبَه

One who lowers his looks has put his heart at ease.[i]

This is because mental images and a person's imagination play an important role in the heart's preoccupations. Looking at anything and everything causes the heart to be preoccupied with all that is seen, creating mental images and imagination in line with all of it. Thus, there are commandments in the holy *sharī'ah* about controlling one's looks and directing them in the right manner.

2. Increased Remembrance of Death

Being attentive of death and the hereafter decreases a person's illicit inclinations. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 260, no. 5555.

ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ يُمِيتُ الشَّهَوَاتِ فِي النَّفْسِ وَ يَقْلَعُ مَنَابِتَ الْغَفْلَةِ وَ يُقَوِّي الْقَلْبَ بِمَوَاعِدِ اللَّهِ وَ يُرِقُّ الطَّبْعَ وَ يَكْسِرُ أَعْلَامَ الْهَوَى وَ يُطْفِئُ نَارَ الْحِرْصِ وَ يُحَقِّرُ الدُّنْيَا

The remembrance of death kills the soul's forbidden desires, pulls out the roots of negligence, strengthens the heart with respect to Divine promises, makes a person's disposition tender, breaks down the outstanding signs of the soul's desires, extinguishes the fire of greed and avarice, and makes the world look insignificant to a person. [i]

The remembrance of death makes a person understand that with death, his outward relations will be severed, and his inner attachments and states will become apparent. These relations are severed to a lesser degree during one's sleep. The deeper a person's attention towards this fact is, the more powerful a role it plays in controlling one's thoughts, actions, and spiritual states, and directing them towards goodness and felicity.

To benefit more from the remembrance of death, it is necessary to pay attention to the agony and difficult circumstances that one goes through during death, and to deliberate over this fact that the spiritual attachments of a person—especially the undesirable ones—manifest themselves to him at the time of death. As per the sayings of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them), when a person is dying, those things that he was very attached to, are personified before him and he speaks with them, even though the people around him do not hear this. [ii]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 133, no. 32.

ii. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vo. 16, p. 105.

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع إِنَّ ابْنَ آدَمَ إِذَا كَانَ فِي آخِرِ يَوْمٍ مِنْ أَيَّامِ الدُّنْيَا وَ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ مِنْ أَيَّامِ الْآخِرَةِ مُثِّلَ لَهُ مَالُهُ وَ وُلْدُهُ وَ عَمَلُهُ فَيَلْتَفِتُ إِلَى مَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ وَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ عَلَيْكَ حَرِيصاً شَحِيحاً فَمَا لِي عِنْدَكَ فَيَقُولُ خُذْ مِنِّي كَفَنَكَ قَالَ فَيَلْتَفِتُ إِلَى وُلْدِهِ فَيَقُولُ وَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ لَكُمْ مُحِبّاً وَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ مُحَامِياً فَمَا ذَا عِنْدَكُمْ

In fact, the luminous presence of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) also appear before a dying person, and for those individuals who were intimate with these luminous beings and held fast to their commandments in this world, then their presence is something delightful for them.[1]

فَيَقُولُونَ نُؤَدِّيكَ إِلَى حُفْرَتِكَ نُوَارِيكَ فِيهَا قَالَ فَيَلْتَفِتُ إِلَى عَمَلِهِ فَيَقُولُ وَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ فِيكَ لَزَاهِداً وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ لَثَقِيلًا فَيَقُولُ أَنَا قَرِينُكَ فِي قَبْرِكَ وَ يَوْمَ نَشْرِكَ حَتَّى أُعْرَضَ أَنَا وَ أَنْتَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ الْحَدِيثَ

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says, "Verily the son of Ādam, when it is the last day from his days in this world, and the first day from his days in the hereafter, a likeness of his wealth, children, and actions is presented before him. He turns to his wealth and says, 'By Allah, I was greedy and miserly for you, so what do I have from you now?' His wealth says, 'Take your shroud from me.' The he turns to his children and says, 'By Allah I used to love you and I used to protect you. So, do you have for me?' They say, 'We will take you to your grave and bury you therein.' Then he turns to his actions and says, 'By Allah I was abstinent when it came to you, you were very difficult.' Then his actions say, 'I am your companion in your grave and on the Day of Judgment until we are both presented before your Lord.'"

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 127, no. 2.

عَنْ سَدِيرٍ الصَّيْرَفِيِّ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يُكْرَهُ الْمُؤْمِنُ عَلَى قَبْضِ رُوحِهِ قَالَ لَا وَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ إِذَا أَتَاهُ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ لِقَبْضِ رُوحِهِ جَزِعَ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ يَا وَلِيَّ اللَّهِ لَا تَجْزَعْ فَوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ مُحَمَّداً ص لَأَنَا أَبَرُّ بِكَ وَ أَشْفَقُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ وَالِدٍ رَحِيمٍ لَوْ حَضَرَكَ افْتَحْ عَيْنَكَ فَانْظُرْ قَالَ وَ يُمَثَّلُ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص وَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ فَاطِمَةُ وَ الْحَسَنُ وَ الْحُسَيْنُ وَ الْأَئِمَّةُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ ع فَيُقَالُ لَهُ هَذَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ فَاطِمَةُ وَ الْحَسَنُ وَ الْحُسَيْنُ وَ الْأَئِمَّةُ ع رُفَقَاؤُكَ قَالَ فَيَفْتَحُ عَيْنَهُ فَيَنْظُرُ فَيُنَادِي رُوحُهُ مُنَادٍ مِنْ قِبَلِ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ فَيَقُولُ- يا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ- ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ راضِيَةً بِالْوَلَايَةِ مَرْضِيَّةً بِالثَّوَابِ فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبادِي يَعْنِي مُحَمَّداً وَ أَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ وَ ادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي فَمَا شَيْءٌ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنِ اسْتِلَالِ رُوحِهِ وَ اللُّحُوقِ بِالْمُنَادِ

Sadīr al-Ṣayrafī said to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "May I be sacrificed for you O son of the Messenger of Allah! Does a believer dislike that his soul be taken?" The Imam said, "No by Allah! When the Angel of Death comes to him to take his soul, he becomes worried at that point. Then the Angel of Death says

3. Remembering the Resurrection and its Difficulties

One of the means of controlling the eye is to remember the difficulties of the world of resurrection (*qiyāmah*), which will afflict the disbelievers and evildoers. Similarly, to remind oneself of the fact that not preventing the eyes from looking at forbidden things (such as those who are *non-maḥram*, or obscene images and videos) may lead one to commit other forbidden acts in such a manner that there is no way left to make amends and compensate. That's why the Noble Qur'ān and the luminous sayings of the Imams (peace be upon them) mention the difficult events of the world of the resurrection and the fire of Hell so that it may serve as a warning for a person. Reminding oneself of these circumstances strengthens one's faith and is also effective in training a person. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

اسْمَعْ يَا ذَا الْغَفْلَةِ وَ التَّصْرِيفِ، مِنْ ذِي الْوَعْظِ وَ التَّعْرِيفِ، جَعَلَ يَوْمَ الْحَشْرِ يَوْمَ الْعَرْضِ وَ السُّؤَالِ، وَ الْجِبَاءِ وَ النَّكَالِ، يَوْمَ تُقْلَبُ إِلَيْهِ أَعْمَالُ الْأَنَامِ، وَ تُحْصَى فِيهِ جَمِيعُ الْآثَامِ، يَوْمَ تَذُوبُ مِنَ النُّفُوسِ أَحْدَاقُ عُيُونِهَا، وَ تَضَعَ الْحَوَامِلُ مَا فِي بُطُونِهَا

Listen, O one who is neglectful and constantly changing, to one who admonishes and informs! The Day of

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to him, 'O *walī* of Allah, do not worry. For verily by the One who appointed Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), I am kinder and more sympathetic with you than a merciful father if he were to arrive before you. Open your eyes and look.' And a likeness of the Messenger of Allah, Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and the Imams from their progeny (peace be upon them) is presented before him. It is said to him, 'This is the Messenger of Allah, Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and the Imams (peace be upon them), your friends.' So, he opens his eyes and looks. Then a caller from the Lord of Might calls out to his soul and says, 'O soul at peace with Muḥammad and his household! Return to your Lord, pleased with the *wilāyah*, and pleasing with the reward. Then enter among My servants, meaning Muḥammad and his household. And enter my paradise.' Therefore, there is nothing more beloved for him than his soul being removed and him joining that caller."

> Assembly [Judgment] is the day of presenting actions and being questioned, the day of [being given] gifts and punishment, the day when people's actions will be turned upside down [inspected thoroughly] and all their sins will be counted, the day when their eye-sockets will melt, and the pregnant women will deliver that which is in their wombs.[i]

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) mentions some of the chastisements in the hereafter that result from not controlling one's eyes, as follows:

> وَ اشْتَدَّ غَضَبُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى امْرَأَةٍ ذَاتِ بَعْلٍ مَلَأَتْ عَيْنَهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ زَوْجِهَا أَوْ ذِي مَحْرَمٍ مِنْهَا
>
> The wrath of Allah is intense on the married woman who fills her eyes with someone other than her husband or a *maḥram*.[ii]

> مَنْ مَلَأَ عَيْنَهُ مِنْ حَرَامٍ مَلَأَ اللّٰهُ عَيْنَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ النَّارِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَتُوب
>
> Whoever fills his eyes with that which is prohibited, then Allah fills his eyes on the Day of Judgment with the fire, unless he repents.[iii]

Since looking is the basis for stimulating a person's sexual desires, the positive looks which were mentioned earlier also play a good role in controlling this faculty. Such looks place a person on the path of pondering on those matters that are beneficial in acquiring real felicity and reaching the path of God's servitude.

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i. al-Ṭūsī, *Al-amālī*, p. 653.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-aʿmāl*, pp. 286-287.

iii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 73, p. 334, no. 1.

THE RIGHTS OF THE ACTS OF WORSHIP

10

THE RIGHT OF PRAYER

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّلَاةِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا وِفَادَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ أَنَّكَ قَائِمٌ بِهَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ خَلِيقاً أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهَا مَقَامَ الذَّلِيلِ الرَّاغِبِ الرَّاهِبِ الْخَائِفِ الرَّاجِي الْمِسْكِينِ الْمُتَضَرِّعِ الْمُعَظِّمِ مَنْ قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِالسُّكُونِ وَ الْإِطْرَاقِ وَ خُشُوعِ الْأَطْرَافِ وَ لِينِ الْجَنَاحِ وَ حُسْنِ الْمُنَاجَاةِ لَهُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَ الطَّلَبِ إِلَيْهِ فِي فَكَاكِ رَقَبَتِكَ الَّتِي أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُكَ وَ اسْتَهْلَكَتْهَا ذُنُوبُكَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

The right of the prayer is that you know that it is an arrival before Allah and that through it you are standing before Allah. So, when you know that, it is appropriate that you stand in the station of him who is lowly, desirous [of His Lord], trembling, fearful, hopeful, abased, beseeching, and magnifying the One who is before him. [This should be done] through tranquillity, shamefulness, expressing humility and tenderness in one's body parts, nicely engaging in whispered supplication with Him in one's heart, and seeking your neck's emancipation [from the Hellfire] while you are surrounded by your wrongdoings and have

been destroyed by your sins. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE MEANING OF SALĀH AND ITS DIFFERENT TYPES

The lexical meaning of the word *salāh* in Arabic is *duʿā'*, meaning to call God by His attributes of perfection. But the word salāh as a technical term, refers to the prayer, a specific set of actions legislated by the Divine Legislator for the purpose of expressing one's servitude to God, seeking help from Him and attaining proximity to Him.[ii]

Prayers are of two types: obligatory and recommended. The obligatory prayers are the daily prayers, the prayer for signs (*āyāt*), the prayer for the deceased, the prayer which becomes obligatory through a vow, the prayers of the father that become obligatory on the eldest son (as per the conditions mentioned in the books of Islamic Law of the respected *marājiʿ*), and the prayer of the obligatory *tawāf*.[iii] The recommended prayers are many in number, some of the most important of which are: the ghufaylah prayer, the daily *nāfilah* prayers, especially the night prayer, the prayers for the *ziyārah* of the Infallibles, the Friday prayer, the prayers of Eid (during the time of occultation of the infallible Imam), the prayer for welcoming the masjid, and the prayer of Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AT THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LEVEL

Prayer is one of the main recommendations of the prophets and the *awliyā'* of religion. When Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be upon him) began to speak from the cradle, after mentioning how he was a prophet and a messenger, he said:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 258.

ii. al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-mufradāt*, under the word *ṣalāh*.

iii. Tawḍih al-masā'il of Imam Khumaynī, the section on obligatory prayers.

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا

He has made me blessed, wherever I may be, and He has enjoined me to [maintain] the prayer and to [pay] the *zakāt* as long as I live. (19:31)

The Noble Qur'ān also says the following regarding Prophet Ismā'īl (peace be upon him) after referring to him as, 'being true to his promise':

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِندَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا

He used to bid his family to [maintain] the prayer and to [pay] the *zakāt* and was pleasing to his Lord. (19:55)

The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) also says:

الصَّلَاةُ عَمُودُ الدِّينِ وَ هِيَ أَوَّلُ مَا يَنْظُرُ اللَّهُ فِيهِ مِنْ عَمَلِ ابْنِ آدَمَ فَإِنْ صَحَّتْ نُظِرَ فِي بَاقِي عَمَلِهِ وَ إِنْ لَمْ تَصِحَّ لَمْ يُنْظَرْ لَهُ فِي عَمَل

Prayer is the pillar of religion, and it is the first action of the son of Ādam which God will look at. So, if then prayers are valid, then his other actions will be looked at, and if the prayers are invalid then his other actions will not be looked at.[i]

Just as how a tent or a house requires a foundation and pillars so that it does not collapse, similarly, the foundation, pillar, and preserver of religion and faith is prayer.

It has been mentioned in a tradition of the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) that:

الْإِيمَانُ مَعْرِفَةٌ بِالْقَلْبِ وَ إِقْرَارٌ بِاللِّسَانِ وَ عَمَلٌ بِالْأَرْكَان

i. al-Maghribī, *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 133.

> Faith is gnosis through the heart, affirmation with the tongue, and acting with the body parts.[i]

The prayer is the manifestation of faith and servitude. In prayer the affirmation of beliefs with the tongue, humility, and obedience through actions, as well as the heart's gnosis of Allah as being the creator and *rabb* are all manifested. For this reason, prayer plays a role in strengthening one's faith in God, bringing about tranquillity, and enlivening as well as deepening faith in society.

THE ESSENCE AND REALITY OF PRAYER

Manifesting servitude and humility towards God in different aspects of life is an indication of a person's perfection. All his actions, even the permissible and ordinary ones such as eating and sleeping, if performed with a Godly motivation and if they are in accordance with the commandments of religion, are considered to be worship. Despite this, among these actions are some which are the manifestation of the servant's humility, the foremost of which is the prayer. Each action, recitation, and movement in it, as well as the form of prayer, has all been sent down by God so that this exhibition of humility is manifested in its complete form.

Prayer is the manifestation of God's remembrance; it protects and strengthens the connection of faith in God. All the prophets and *awliyā'* of Allah considered prayer to be the essential factor in reaching God and gaining proximity to Him; they all saw it as the complete manifestation of God's remembrance. Allah says to Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him):

> إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي
>
> Indeed, I am Allah—there is no god except Me. So, worship Me, and maintain the prayer for My remembrance. (20:14)

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (peace be upon him), vol. 1, pp. 226-227, no. 1, 2, and 4.

The reality of remembrance (*dhikr*) is that a person perceives the One Who is being remembered with his entire existence. If a person, in his everyday actions, has self-vigilance and is particular about following the commandments of the *sharī'ah* and gaining his Lord's pleasure, then his heart will be able to perceive the presence of Allah. Some specific phrases of *dhikr* such as the noble phrases *lā ilāha illallāh*, *subḥānallah*, and the *ṣalawāt*, leave specific spiritual effects on a person's soul, but performing the absolute remembrance (*al-dhikr al-mutlaq*) is the condition for those verbal forms of *dhikr* to have an effect on the human's existence. The absolute remembrance means that a person always see himself in the presence of Allah, recognizes that He is present and supervising all a person's affairs, and he maintains the appropriate etiquette of being in Allah's presence. How many verbal forms of *dhikr* are uttered by the tongue while a person is heedless and hence do not leave their specific effect on the person's soul!

We must realize that a person's various daily obligations cause his thoughts and soul to be unfocused and negligent. To put an end to this lack of the soul's ability to focus and this negligence—which stems from an intimacy and relationships with material affairs—prayer is necessary. This is because prayer is a specific type of attention and complete remembrance. Thus, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) in this treatise on rights introduces the prayer as being a means of arriving at God. Being inattentive to prayer causes one to fall into negligence and darkness. A person must establish the prayers in such a way that a transformation takes place within him, even a small one. In this manner he can gradually reach the reality of prayer. Of course, to attain any important or lofty matter, one must first start with its weaker and lower levels, appreciate the value of this lower level, and make the conditions for its continuation and strengthening available. In this way, such a person can attain higher levels. How many people at the onset would recite their prayers while considering it to be something heavy and imposed, yet they did not despair or lose

hope, until gradually they felt its sweetness and pleasure!

To whatever level of comprehension and gnosis a person reaches, to that same extent he will taste the effects and results of his prayer, and his prayer will also influence his other actions. To acquire higher levels of comprehension and gnosis regarding the reality of the prayer, it is necessary to first understand the position prayer has with the help of the sayings of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them). This is because they have tasted the reality and pleasures of prayer and have even demonstrated these states at times. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said to his loyal companion Abū Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ قُرَّةَ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ وَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَمَا حَبَّبَ إِلَى الْجَائِعِ الطَّعَامَ وَ إِلَى الظَّمْآنِ الْمَاءَ وَ إِنَّ الْجَائِعَ إِذَا أَكَلَ شَبِعَ وَ إِنَّ الظَّمْآنَ إِذَا شَرِبَ رَوِيَ وَ أَنَا لَا أَشْبَعُ مِنَ الصَّلَاة

> O Abū Dharr! Allah whose praise is great, has made prayer to be the comfort of my eye, and has made it beloved to me just like he made food beloved to the hungry and water to the thirsty. However, when a hungry person eats food, he becomes satiated, and when a thirsty person drinks water, he becomes quenched, while I do not get satiated from prayer.[i]

The prayer is a Divinely legislated, specific type of concentration. Specific words, specific movements, a specific direction, and a specific intention all result in a specific type of concentration for a person. Of course, a type of concentration which is from God and for the purpose of reaching Him is something praiseworthy. The basis of the path of guidance is that a person, in all affairs of his life, should concentrate and be focused on Allah, which naturally requires constant observance and vigilance throughout the day and night. This

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i. al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 461.

daily vigilance with respect to one's actions is a very difficult task especially because, when a person resolves to undertake this, Shayṭān also enters the scene with his insinuations (*waswasah*). The types of concentration that some monks acquire are not that difficult because these monks do whatever they want throughout the day and only perform some actions during certain periods of time, thereby acquiring specific powers. But because these actions are not sanctioned by religion, they distance a person from Divine and human goals. One of the commandments of the *sharī'ah* which results in concentration and turns a person's focus to the unseen world and to God, is prayer. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) was asked, "Which is the most virtuous and most beloved action in the eyes of Allah?" The Imam said:

لَا أَعْرِفُ شَيْئاً بَعْدَ الْمَعْرِفَةِ بِاللَّهِ أَفْضَلَ مِنَ الصَّلَاة

I do not know of anything after the knowledge of Allah that is more virtuous than the prayer.[i]

It is necessary to mention this point that prayer has two aspects: one is the aspect of its validity which pertains to the outward affairs of prayer, its rulings, its preliminaries, and concurrent components (such as *wudū'*, recitations, the direction of qiblah, and how one's clothes must not be usurped). These have been mentioned by the noble jurists in the books of jurisprudence and Islamic Law. If these rulings are observed, apart from fulfilling the obligatory responsibility, many of the social, economic, and individual affairs of a person will be rectified and he will not commit many types of sins. The second aspect of prayer is the aspect of it being accepted. This aspect pertains to the inner form of prayer and its soul. This aspect is effective with regards to refining a person's soul from ugliness, elevating the level of his faith, and strengthening his spiritual connection with Allah.

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i. al-Maghribī, *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 133.

CONDITIONS FOR PRAYER'S ACCEPTANCE

1. Wilāyah of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be Upon Them)

The most important condition for the prayer's acceptance is to believe in the *wilāyah* of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Of course, this matter is a condition for the acceptance of all actions performed by a monotheist and a Muslim, but it has been emphasized even more so when it comes to the prayer. This is because the *wilāyah* of the Ahl al-Bayt has a very close relationship with the reality of prayer. Practical *wilāyah* refers to when a person's heart believes in the truthfulness of the Ahl al-Bayt's *wilāyah*, when he follows their commands and practice (*sīrah*), and when he refrains from following other than this family in all matters. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) said:

أَمَا لَوْ أَنَّ رَجُلًا قَامَ لَيْلَهُ وَ صَامَ نَهَارَهُ وَ تَصَدَّقَ بِجَمِيعِ مَالِهِ وَ حَجَّ جَمِيعَ دَهْرِهِ وَ لَمْ يَعْرِفْ وَلَايَةَ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ فَيُوَالِيَهُ وَ يَكُونَ جَمِيعُ أَعْمَالِهِ بِدَلَالَتِهِ إِلَيْهِ مَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فِي ثَوَابِهِ وَ لَا كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْإِيمَانِ

> Be informed that if a a person stands in prayer for the entire night, fasts during the day, gives all his wealth in charity, and continually performs the Hajj while he is not aware of the *wilāyah* of the *walī* of Allah in order to take him as his *walī* and so that all of his actions are according to his guidance, then such a person does not have any right on Allah regarding his reward and he is not from the believers.[i]

i. al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. 1, p. 119, no. 2; al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 19, no. 5.

2. Wara'

Wara' means to refrain from actions prohibited by Allah as well as those actions that are doubtful, and to perform the actions made obligatory by Him. It is narrated from the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) that:

لَوْ صَلَّيْتُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَأَوْتَادٍ وَ صُمْتُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَالْحَنَايَا
لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا بِوَرَعٍ حَاجِزٍ

> If you recite prayers so much that you become like a dried piece of wood, and if you fast so much that you become curved [your body becomes very thin], Allah shall not accept it from you unless you have a type of *wara'* that prevents [you from sinning].[i]

All sins cause a person's *wara'* to be lost and prevent his prayer as well as other acts of worship from being accepted. Despite this, some sins are specifically mentioned in traditions as being the cause of losing *wara'* and prayer not being accepted. These will now be mentioned.

OBSTACLES TO THE PRAYER'S ACCEPTANCE

Some sins are specific obstacles to the acceptance of prayers. Furthermore, due to the importance of prayers, some blameworthy actions that are not sins also act as obstacles in the way of its acceptance.

1. Oppression

The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

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i. al-Ḥillī, *'Uddah al-dā'ī*, p. 153; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 81, p. 258, no. 56.

أَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيَّ أَنْ يَا أَخَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ يَا أَخَا الْمُنْذِرِينَ أَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ لَا يَدْخُلُوا بَيْتاً مِنْ بُيُوتِي وَ لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ عِبَادِي عِنْدَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ مَظْلِمَةٌ فَإِنِّي أَلْعَنُهُ مَا دَامَ قَائِماً يُصَلِّي بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ حَتَّى يَرُدَّ تِلْكَ الظُّلَامَةَ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا

> Allah revealed to me, "O brother of the apostles! O brother of those who warn! Warn your community that they do not enter one of My houses while they have something they oppressively took from one of My servants. For indeed, I shall curse such a person for as long as he stands in front of Me and prays, unless he returns that which he had oppressively taken, back to its owner."[i]

It does not make a difference if this oppression is financial in nature or not, and if it is social or domestic. Nor does it matter if the oppressed is a neighbour, friend, spouse, child, father, or mother. However, committing an act of oppression against one's parents is worse than other acts of oppression. It has been mentioned in a tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) that:

مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى أَبَوَيْهِ نَظَرَ مَاقِتٍ وَ هُمَا ظَالِمَانِ لَهُ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ صَلَاةً

> Whoever looks angrily at his parents, Allah will not accept any prayer from him, even if his parents were unjust to him.[ii]

2. Pride

Pride and haughtiness before Allah or with regards to His creation and His servants, apart from being a moral vice, is also one of the obstacles in the acceptance of prayers. It has been mentioned in a noble tradition that Allah says the following addressing Prophet

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i. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmūʿah warrām*, vol. 1, p. 53.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 349, no. 5.

Mūsā Kalīmullah (peace be upon him):

إِنَّمَا أَقْبَلُ الصَّلَاةَ لِمَنْ تَوَاضَعَ لِعَظَمَتِي وَ لَم يَتَعَظَّم عَلَى خَلْقِي

I will only accept the prayer from those who are humble before My grandeur and who are not proud with respect to My creation.[i]

3. Backbiting

Another obstacle in the acceptance of prayers is backbiting a believer, that is to speak ill of him or mention his defects when he is not present in a way that would upset him. This is the case regardless of whether the backbiting is performed by speaking, writing or by making gestures and indications. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

مَنِ اغْتَابَ مُسْلِماً أَوْ مُسْلِمَةً لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى صَلَاتَهُ وَ لَا صِيَامَهُ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْماً إِلَّا أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ صَاحِبُه

If a person backbites about a Muslim man or woman, Allah the Exalted does not accept his prayer or his fasting for forty days, unless the one who was spoken about forgives him [or unless the backbiter seeks forgiveness for the person he spoke about].[ii] [iii]

4. Eight Things Mentioned in a Tradition

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

ثَمَانِيَةٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ صَلَاةً الْعَبْدُ الْآبِقُ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَى مَوْلَاهُ وَ النَّاشِزَةُ عَنْ زَوْجِهَا وَ هُوَ عَلَيْهَا سَاخِطٌ وَ مَانِعُ الزَّكَاةِ

i. al-ʿĀmilī, *Al-jawāhir al-saniyyah*, p. 154.

ii. The Arabic can be translated in both ways (Ed.)

iii. al-Shaʿīrī, *Jamiʿ al-akhbār*, p. 641.

وَ تَارِكُ الْوُضُوءِ وَ الْجَارِيَةُ الْمُدْرِكَةُ تُصَلِّي بِغَيْرِ خِمَارٍ وَ إِمَامُ قَوْمٍ يُصَلِّي بِهِمْ وَ هُمْ لَهُ كَارِهُونَ وَ الزِّبِّينُ قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَ مَا الزِّبِّينُ قَالَ الَّذِي يُدَافِعُ الْغَائِطَ وَ الْبَوْلَ وَ السَّكْرَانُ

"Allah does not accept the prayer of eight people: a slave who has escaped until he returns to his master, a woman who does not make herself available to her husband while he is angry with her, one who does not give *zakāt*, one who abandons *wuḍū'*, a girl who has reached the age of *bulūgh* but still recites prayers without covering her hair, a prayer leader whose followers detest him [they do not want him as their leader], a *zibbīn*—" They [the companions] said, "O Messenger of Allah. Who is a *zibbīn*?" He said, "One who restrains his urine and stool [praying while holding them back with pressure], and [lastly] one who is intoxicated.[i]

EFFECTS AND BLESSINGS OF PRAYERS

1. Staying Aloof from Sins and Evil

One of the effects of prayers is that is keeps a person away from ugly and indecent actions. The Noble Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ

Indeed, the prayer restrains from indecent and wrongful conduct. (29:45)

'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī (may Allah be pleased with him) says in his exegesis of this noble verse:

> One who wants to observe the form and structure of prayer must refrain from many evil actions. First, he must perform *wuḍū'* and that too with permissible water meaning that it should not be usurped or prohibited. Then he must ensure that the vessel of water and the place of

i. al-Sadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 407, no. 3.

performing *wuḍū'* are also permissible. His intention must also be sincere, for example, he cannot perform *wuḍū'* to cool down because in this case the *wuḍū'* will be invalid. His clothes and the place of prayer must not be usurped. [Again] for the prayer to be valid, his intention for performing the prayer must be sincere and not ostentatious nor out of fear [or out of some other ungodly intention]. If someone recites the prayer while observing these outward rulings and conditions and while also paying attention to the soul and content of the prayer, then the prayer has protected him from many outward and inner evils.[i]

2. Purification from Sins

In some traditions, prayer is likened to a stream that passes in front of one's house and in order to enter the house, a person must put his feet in the stream and wash them at least five times a day. It is then that he may enter the house without bringing in any impurities. Indeed, prayer is a means by which a person can enter the Divine sanctuary and meet Him, while he is clean and purified. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الصَّلَاةِ مَثَلُ النَّهَرِ الَّذِي يُنَقِّي كُلَّمَا صَلَّى صَلَاةً كَانَ كَفَّارَةً لِذُنُوبِهِ إِلَّا ذَنْبٍ أَخْرَجَهُ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ مُقِيمٍ عَلَيْهِ

The example of prayer is that of a stream of water which cleans. Every time a person prays a prayer, it is a compensation for his sins except the sin that removes him from faith and which he insists upon.[ii]

3. Staying Aloof from Pride and Haughtiness

Pride and haughtiness have different levels, the first of which is the outward pride and haughtiness. This means that a person does not want to obey the outward commandments of the *sharī'ah*. He

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i. al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 16, p. 134.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 79, p. 236, no. 66.

does not want to recite the prayer at all, or he does not want to recite it according to its conditions and etiquettes, which are mentioned in the books of Islamic Laws. The next level of pride appears in a hidden manner, it can unconsciously be present in us. For example, when a person compares his capabilities and possessions with those of others and thinks that he has more than others, a state within him arises whereby he considers himself to be better than them. This level of pride is more widespread and more subtle than the previous level, and it can also occur in spiritual matters, ruining the soul and spirituality of a person. Thus, Sayyidah Zahrā' (peace be upon her) says:

فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْزِيهاً مِنَ الْكِبْرِ

> Allah has made the prayer obligatory to keep a person aloof from pride.[i]

After much toil and difficulty, the late Mīrzā Jawād Malikī Tabrīzī reached the presence of the great teacher of *akhlāq*, the late Ākhūnd Ḥusayn Qulī Hamadānī (may Allah have mercy on them), to engage in self-purification. After some time passed, the teacher did not pay any attention to him! One day he said to his teacher, "We came to you from far away, in order to rectify our soul and engage in self-purification, but you pay no attention to us!" He replied, "You will not reform." He asked, "Why?" The teacher said, "From the first day that you came, you sat at the front of the gathering!"

The late Mīrzā Jawād Tabrīzī was the scholar of his own city and out of habit, he would sit at the front of any gathering. However, after these words of his teacher, he would always sit at the back of the gathering. Such events indicate the hidden and inner attributes of a person. If prayer is performed with attention to its contents and essence, then a person shall come out of this state.

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i. Ibid., vol. 79, p. 209, no. 19.

4. Growth of the Soul

To whatever level of Divine comprehension and gnosis a person reaches, it is to that same extent that he sees the effect and results of his prayer, and to that same extent his prayer will also influence his other actions. It is only natural that a hungry a person will become full after eating and will not have room for more food because a material vessel has a limited capacity. But the soul of a person has a very high capacity, especially the soul of those men who have attained perfections such as the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). The more prayers they perform, the more their capacity expands, and the more pleasure they experience. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

لِلْمُصَلِّي ثَلَاثُ خِصَالٍ إِذَا قَامَ فِي صَلَاتِهِ يَتَنَاثَرُ الْبِرُّ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَعْنَانِ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى مَفْرِقِ رَأْسِهِ وَ تَحُفُّ بِهِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ تَحْتِ قَدَمَيْهِ إِلَى أَعْنَانِ السَّمَاءِ وَ مَلَكٌ يُنَادِي أَيُّهَا الْمُصَلِّي لَوْ تَعْلَمُ مَنْ تُنَاجِي مَا انْفَتَلْتَ

There are three traits for the reciter of prayer: when he stands for prayer, goodness descends upon his head from the limits of the heavens, angels encompass the area between the ground under his feet and the limits of the heavens, and an angel calls out, "O one who prays! If you only knew with whom you are conversing, you would never turn away."[i]

ATTRIBUTES OF THE REAL RECITERS OF PRAYER

1. Humility Before God

Reciting prayers with humility is among the foremost attributes of a believer. The Noble Qur'ān says:

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i. al-Tabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq,* p. 300.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

Certainly, the faithful have attained salvation, those who are humble in their prayers. (23:1-2)

If someone wants to manifest his servitude and faith towards Allah, the best manner of doing so is in prayer. And since this servitude and connection ought to always be maintained, this means that the believer should always be in the state of prayer. Naturally this is not possible, nor has Allah desired such a thing. Instead, a person must manifest his servitude towards God by reciting prayers at specific periods of time and at other times, by fulfilling his religious responsibilities. This means that he always obeys the commandments of God, performing his obligations and refraining from sins. In the prayer specifically, he must control his thoughts and maintain a sincere intention from the beginning of the prayer till its end. When the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) was asked about *khushūʿ*, he said:

التَّوَاضُعُ فِي الصَّلَاةِ وَ أَنْ يُقْبِلَ الْعَبْدُ بِقَلْبِهِ كُلِّهِ عَلَى رَبِّه

[*Khushūʿ* means to have] humility during prayer, and that the slave turns to his Lord with all his attention and heart.[i]

Some Ways to Acquire Humility

1. Acquiring Waraʿ

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says to Abū Dharr:

لَوْ صَلَّيْتُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَأَوْتَادٍ وَ صُمْتُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَالْحَنَايَا لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا بِوَرَعٍ حَاجِزٍ

If you recite prayers so much that you become like a dried piece of wood, and if you fast so much that you become

i. al-Maghribī, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 158.

curved [your body becomes very thin], Allah shall not accept it from you unless you have a type of *wara'* that prevents [you from sinning].[i]

2. Recognizing Allah's High Station and Greatness

When a person recognizes his utter poverty, inability, and lowliness in front of the Absolutely Powerful and the Needless Sustainer, he becomes humble and turns to Allah with abjectness.

3. Attention to the Prayers of the Awliyā' of God

Paying attention to the intermediaries of Divine grace and the *awliyā'* of Allah as well as performing *tawassul* to them, are effective means of preparing the grounds to gradually acquire humility. Similarly, reading about their lives and how they would pray or how their servitude to Allah was, are also such means. When a person pays attention to the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) and how their state would transform during prayer, he increases in his inclination towards prayers and desires to reach similar states and spiritual pleasures.

It has been mentioned in a tradition that when Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) would ready himself for prayer, his blessed face would transform out of fear of God.[ii] Also, it has been mentioned about Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (peace be upon him) that during prayers, his luminous face would turn yellow. They used to ask him, "Why is your state such?" He would answer:

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 81, p. 258, no. 56.

ii. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Falāḥ al-sā'il*, p. 101.

كَانَ عَلِيٌّ إِذَا قَامَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَقَالَ وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّماواتِ وَ الْأَرْضَ تَغَيَّرَ لَوْنُهُ حَتَّى يُعْرَفَ ذَلِكَ فِي وَجْهِهِ

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says, "When 'Alī (peace be upon him) would stand for prayer and say, 'I have turned my face to towards Him who originated the heavens and the earth,' his colour would change until this would be apparent on his face."

حَقٌّ عَلَى كُلِّ مَنْ وَقَفَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ أَنْ يَصْفَرَّ لَوْنُهُ وَ تَرْتَعِدَ مَفَاصِلُه

It is incumbent on one who stands before the Lord of the Throne [One who has great power] that his colour turns yellow and his joints [and knees] tremble.[i]

4. Having Presence of Heart in Prayer

The more one pays attention to the presence of God in his day-to-day life, the more he will perceive Allah and derive pleasure from His remembrance. Being specifically vigilant of the heart—which is one of the main elements in acquiring humility in prayer—is called *wara'*. If one is cautious in this regard, inspecting his actions on a daily basis to ensure that he has not transgressed, and if he persists in doing this, then he will derive pleasure from his prayers. Maintaining such self-vigilance is the soul's food. Just as how the body's food must be continuously eaten for its health, the souls' food must also be continuously eaten.

Ways to Acquire Presence of Heart

It is befitting here to discuss how one can control their thoughts and achieve presence of heart in prayer, because having humility during praying is not possible without this.

1. Performing the Nāfilah and Other Recommended Actions

It has been mentioned in a tradition that once, one side of Imam al-Sajjād's (peace be upon him) cloak fell from his shoulder during prayers and he did not straighten it. After the prayer, one of his companions asked him, "Why did you not pay attention to your cloak?" The Imam said:

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i. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 4, p. 14.

وَيْحَكَ أَ تَدْرِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مَنْ كُنْتُ إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ إِلَّا مَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا بِقَلْبِهِ

> Woe unto you! Do you know who I was standing in front of? Verily the prayer of a servant is not accepted except that part in which he had presence of heart.

The person said, "Then woe unto us for we have perished!" The Imam answered:

كَلَّا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُتَمِّمُ ذَلِكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِالنَّوَافِلِ

> It is not so! Very Allah compensates its [the prayer's] shortcomings through the *nāfilah*.[i]

The *nāfilah* includes the supererogatory prayers and supplications as well as the *adhkār* that are recommended prior to, after and during the prayer. These recommended actions cause a person to always pay attention to the reality of prayer.

2. Remembrance of God Throughout the Day

The essence of the prayer is to migrate towards Allah. To whatever extent a person pays attention to God in his day-to-day actions, to the same extent he can pay attention to God by concentrating in his prayer. Such concentration cannot be acquired spontaneously, rather its preliminaries must be implemented gradually and continuously. Various occupations throughout the day cause a person's soul and thoughts to be scattered. To emerge from this scatteredness, he must lead his thoughts in a single direction so that gradually he comes out of this state of seeking multiplicity and obeying different inclinations. Such a migration occurs by constant remembrance and humility before the greatness of Allah. As is mentioned in a hadīth qudsī:

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vo. 5, p. 478, no. 6.

إِنَّمَا أَقْبَلُ الصَّلَاةَ لِمَنْ تَوَاضَعَ لِعَظَمَتِي وَ يَكُفُّ نَفْسَهُ عَنِ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنْ أَجْلِي وَ يَقْطَعُ نَهَارَهُ بِذِكْرِي وَ لَا يَتَعَاظَمُ عَلَى خَلْقِي

> Verily I only accept the prayer of a person who is humble before My greatness, holds back his self from his desires for My sake, spends his day in My remembrance, and does not behave arrogantly with My creation.[i]

Prayer is an expression of humility before the One who has also asked believers to be humble towards His other servants and manifest that humility in their day-to-day behaviour. This behaviour could be through a believer's tongue, the glances of his eye, or his different actions. Acting on this command requires a high level of self-vigilance because such a person not only has to refrain from performing prohibited actions, but also actions that go against *akhlāq*. This is as opposed to those who behave arrogantly, who look at others out of arrogance and do not pay attention to what others say. One who wants to recite his prayers and stand before God, regardless of whether he is a boss or a lowly employee, ought to leave aside these titles in order to acquire presence of heart and humility in his prayers.

3. The State of Attention and Remembrance

If a person tries to ensure that he does not spend the hours of his life in negligence and sin, and tries to couple his actions with Godly intentions, then he develops the readiness and capability to transcend and attain a lofty level of Divine attention and remembrance. When this state of readiness is present in a person, this attention and concentration is easily acquired during prayer. Hence prayer is known as the ascension (*miʿrāj*) of a believer. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

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i. Ibid., vol. 15, p. 210, no. 6.

مَنْ صَلَّى رَكْعَتَيْنِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَقُولُ فِيهِمَا انْصَرَفَ وَ لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ ذَنْبٌ

If a person recites two units of prayer and comprehends what he is saying in it, then he completes the prayer without there being [remaining] any sin between him and Allah.[i]

4. Being Prepared for Prayer and Reciting it at the Beginning of its Time

From a few minutes prior to the time of prayer, one ought to be prepared for prayer and be in anticipation of it. A Muslim or a monotheist is not someone who is negligent when it comes to performing their religious obligations. This is particularly the case with regards to prayer; in addition to praying, he strives to pray at the beginning of the time because the prayer recited at the beginning of the time leaves a special effect on a person's soul. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ صَلَّى الصَّلَوَاتِ الْمَفْرُوضَاتِ فِي أَوَّلِ وَقْتِهَا فَأَقَامَ حُدُودَهَا رَفَعَهَا الْمَلَكُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ بَيْضَاءَ نَقِيَّةً وَ هِيَ تَهْتِفُ بِهِ حَفِظَكَ اللَّهُ كَمَا حَفِظْتَنِي أَسْتَوْدِعُكَ اللَّهَ كَمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَنِي مَلَكاً كَرِيماً وَ مَنْ صَلَّاهَا بَعْدَ وَقْتِهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ عِلَّةٍ فَلَمْ يُقِمْ حُدُودَهَا رَفَعَهَا الْمَلَكُ سَوْدَاءَ مُظْلِمَةً وَ هِيَ تَهْتِفُ بِهِ ضَيَّعْتَنِي ضَيَّعَكَ اللَّهُ كَمَا ضَيَّعْتَنِي وَ لَا رَعَاكَ اللَّهُ كَمَا لَمْ تَرْعَنِي

Whoever prays the obligatory prayers at the beginning of its time and observes its rulings [and etiquettes], then an angel raises those prayers to the heavens in a state of whiteness and purity while the prayer calls out to its reciter saying, "May Allah protect you in the same way

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 266, no. 12.

> you protected me, and may Allah take you under His protection just as you put me under the protection of a noble angel." But whoever prays after the beginning of the time without any excuse and does not observe their rulings [and etiquettes], then an angel raises those prayers in a state of blackness and darkness while the prayer calls out to its reciter saying, "May Allah neglect you just as you neglected me, and may Allah not care for you just as you did not care for me."[i]

5. Complete Attention to the Etiquettes of Prayer

Adhering to the recommended etiquettes of prayer, be they pertaining to actions before the prayer or during it, causes one's mind to concentrate on the actions and *dhikr* recited in prayer and serves as a preliminary for increasing one's humility. In particular, the etiquettes of *wudū'*, reciting the *adhān* and *iqāmah*, as well as being completely attentive towards the contents and concepts of what is being recited are all very important.

6. Reading About Prayers

Reading books of traditions regarding the prayer, or books that discuss the secrets, etiquettes, and effects of prayer, increases a person's awareness regarding the reality, essence, and etiquettes of prayer.

7. Paying Attention to the Meaning of the Words in Prayer

As a start point, paying attention to the meanings of the words in prayer is very beneficial in acquiring presence of heart. However, some individuals are unable to concentrate well and suffer from scattered thoughts. Their soul is disturbed, their sleep is restless, their minds go here and there when reading or during class. Such people must overpower this problem by employing different techniques. For example, they could practice emptying their mind from disturbing thoughts, identifying the underlying problems they have

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 80, p. 10, no. 7.

and their respective solutions, refraining from unnecessary occupations, making a schedule, bringing about discipline in their life, controlling their thoughts and imagination, and learning the skills and techniques of reading and sleeping. Over time, they will gradually succeed if they persist in these matters and put their trust in God.

2. Refraining from Greed and Selfishness

After humility, the second attribute of one who truly prays, is to refrain from greed and selfishness. The Noble Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

> Indeed, a person has been created covetous: anxious when an ill befalls him and grudging when good comes his way — [all are such] except the prayerful [those who truly pray]. (70:19-22)

This fact that the nature of a person has been created such that he is greedy, is actually a positive aspect of his existence. This is because it makes him greedy when it comes to acquiring perfections and attracting and procuring goodness. However, if this innate quality of greed becomes deviated and a person chooses the path of evil, then this very nature shall lead him to the depths of the Hellfire. Thus, when evil comes his way, he moans and complains, but when goodness comes his way, he does not give it to others. This is because he has been created greedy and selfish. These innate traits are placed within a person's existence by God but directing and guiding them in the right direction must be done by a person himself, through self-vigilance and struggling against the self.

As per the explicit statements of the Noble Qur'ān, if someone wants to guide these innate inclinations to the right path and allow them to develop, then the way to do this is to establish prayer.[i] This

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i. Qur'ān 6:71-72.

is because the basis of prayer is to have humility before God and His commandments. Thus, those matters which seem beneficial but are in contrast with this humility and servitude, such as not paying *khums* or *zakāt*, will be abandoned by someone who truly prays. On the other hand, those matters which seem bad or harmful but are in conformation with this humility and servitude, are considered good and beneficial, such as fasting in the month of Ramadan, jihad and martyrdom in the path of God.

3. Persistence in Reciting Prayers

God introduces another attribute of those who truly pray as having persistence in acts of worship:

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

Those who persevere in their prayers. [i]

A real reciter of prayer, apart from being particular in performing the daily prayers, always wants to be in the state of prayer and to manifest humility before God. Thus, he gives importance to the recommended acts and the *nāfilah* prayers. In some traditions, this verse has been explained as referring to the *nāfilah* prayers, while the verse about being watchful of prayers, [ii] has been explained as referring to the obligatory prayers. [iii]

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i. Qur'ān 70:23.

ii. Qur'ān 23:9.

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 270, no. 12.

سَأَلْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ ع عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلى صَلَواتِهِمْ يُحافِظُونَ قَالَ هِيَ الْفَرِيضَةُ قُلْتُ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلى صَلاتِهِمْ دائِمُونَ قَالَ هِيَ النَّافِلَة

I asked Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) regarding the verse, "Those who are watchful over their prayers." The Imam said, "Those are the obligatory prayers." Then I asked about the verse, "Those who persevere in their prayers." The Imam said, "Those are the *nāfilah* prayers."

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYING AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME

A Muslim or a monotheist is not someone who is negligent when it comes to performing their religious obligations. This is particularly the case with regards to prayer. In addition to praying, he strives to pray at the beginning of the time because the prayer recited at the beginning of the time leaves a special effect on a person's soul. In his luminous letter to Mālik al-Ashtar, Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

وَ أَمْضِ لِكُلِّ يَوْمٍ عَمَلَهُ فَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ يَوْمٍ مَا فِيهِ. وَ اجْعَلْ لِنَفْسِكَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَفْضَلَ تِلْكَ الْمَوَاقِيتِ وَ أَجْزَلَ تِلْكَ الْأَقْسَامِ وَ إِنْ كَانَتْ كُلُّهَا لِلَّهِ إِذَا صَلَحَتْ فِيهَا النِّيَّةُ وَ سَلِمَتْ مِنْهَا الرَّعِيَّةُ وَ لْيَكُنْ فِي خَاصَّةِ مَا تُخْلِصُ بِهِ لِلَّهِ دِينَكَ إِقَامَةُ فَرَائِضِهِ الَّتِي هِيَ لَهُ خَاصَّةً فَأَعْطِ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَدَنِكَ فِي لَيْلِكَ وَ نَهَارِكَ وَ وَفِّ مَا تَقَرَّبْتَ بِهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ كَامِلًا غَيْرَ مَثْلُومٍ وَ لَا مَنْقُوصٍ بَالِغاً مِنْ بَدَنِكَ مَا بَلَغ

On each day, finish the work meant for that day, because every day has its own work. Keep aside the best of times and the finest of periods for the worship of Allah, although all times are [in reality] for Allah, provided your intention is pure and your subjects are in a state of safety therein. One of the actions that you must perform sincerely for Allah, is to fulfil those obligations which are specifically for Him. Therefore, devote to Allah some of your physical activity during the night and the day, and whatever [worship] you perform for seeking nearness to Allah, it should be complete, without defect or deficiency, regardless of the physical exertion it may involve.[i]

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, letter no. 53.

Imam al-Ṣadiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ صَلَّى الصَّلَوَاتِ الْمَفْرُوضَاتِ فِي أَوَّلِ وَقْتِهَا فَأَقَامَ حُدُودَهَا رَفَعَهَا الْمَلَكُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ بَيْضَاءَ نَقِيَّةً وَ هِيَ تَهْتِفُ بِهِ حَفِظَكَ اللَّهُ كَمَا حَفِظْتَنِي أَسْتَوْدِعُكَ اللَّهَ كَمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَنِي مَلَكاً كَرِيماً وَ مَنْ صَلَّاهَا بَعْدَ وَقْتِهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ عِلَّةٍ فَلَمْ يُقِمْ حُدُودَهَا رَفَعَهَا الْمَلَكُ سَوْدَاءَ مُظْلِمَةً وَ هِيَ تَهْتِفُ بِهِ ضَيَّعْتَنِي ضَيَّعَكَ اللَّهُ كَمَا ضَيَّعْتَنِي وَ لَا رَعَاكَ اللَّهُ كَمَا لَمْ تَرْعَنِي

Whoever prays the obligatory prayers at the beginning of their time and observes their rulings [and etiquettes], then an angel raises those prayers to the heavens in a state of whiteness and purity while the prayer calls out to its reciter saying, "May Allah protect you in the same way you protected me, and may Allah take you under His protection just as you put me under the protection of a noble angel." But whoever prays after the beginning of the time without any excuse and does not observe their rulings [and etiquettes], then an angel raises those prayers in a state of blackness and darkness while the prayer calls out to its reciter saying, "May Allah neglect you just as you neglected me, and may Allah not care for you just as you did not care for me." [i]

The same Imam, in order to encourage the servants of Allah to pray their prayers at the beginning of its time, explained the verses that say:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلاتِهِمْ ساهُونَ

Woe to those who pray, but are heedless of their prayers (107:4-5)

In the following manner:

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 80, p. 10, no. 7.

تَأْخِيرُ الصَّلَاةِ عَنْ أَوَّلِ وَقْتِهَا لِغَيْرِ عُذْر

[These verses refer to] delaying the prayer beyond the beginning of its time without any excuse.

The eminent *marjaʿ* Ayatullah Bahjat (may Allah be pleased with him), narrating from his teacher the unparalleled mystic Hāj Mīrzā ʿAlī Qādī, used to say:

> "If someone is particular about praying at the beginning of the time and does not reach the lofty perfections of a person, he should curse me." [Ayatullah Bahjat then continued himself saying,] "We did not hear this sentence from anyone else! When I mentioned praying at the beginning of its time, I meant just praying, not that it must be a perfect prayer!"

Based on these points, it is clear that someone who takes his prayers lightly and considers them unimportant will undoubtedly do the same with regards to other commandments of the *sharīʿah*. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said the following in the last moments of his noble life:

لَا يَنَالُ شَفَاعَتَنَا مَنِ اسْتَخَفَّ بِالصَّلَاة

The intercession of us [the Ahl al-Bayt] will not reach one who takes his prayers lightly.[i]

One who takes his prayers lightly, slowly moves towards abandoning prayer. Eventually he does so, leaving aside his prayers altogether. Such a person, who intentionally and consciously abandons prayer has in reality abandoned his religious beliefs and stopped showing humility and seeking help from Allah. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

بَيْنَ الْعَبْدِ وَ بَيْنَ الْكُفْرِ تَرْكُ الصَّلَاة

The distance between servitude [and faith on the one

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 270, no. 15.

hand] and disbelief [and atheism on the other hand] is the abandonment of prayers![i]

i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 79, p. 202, no. 2.

11
THE RIGHT OF HAJJ

وَ حَقُّ الْحَجِّ أَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ وِفَادَةٌ إِلَى رَبِّكَ وَ فِرَارٌ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكَ وَ فِيهِ قَبُولُ تَوْبَتِكَ وَ قَضَاءُ الْفَرْضِ الَّذِي أَوْجَبَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْكَ

And the right of Hajj is that you know that it is an arrival into the presence of your Lord and an escaping from your sins towards Him, and that in it lies the acceptance of your repentance and the fulfilment of the obligation which Allah the Exalted made obligatory upon you.[i]

THE MOTIVE BEHIND LEGISLATING HAJJ

The outward actions of Hajj,[ii] apart from having apparent effects, also have inner realities behind them. In addition to precise recommendations regarding the performance of outward affairs, Islam also has recommendations regarding the inner realities.

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 620, no. 3214.

ii. These actions are explained in the books of Islamic laws (*Risālah al-ʿamaliyyah*) and *Manāsik al-ḥajj*.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN HAJJ AND PRAYERS

Acts of worship such as prayers and Hajj have specific qualities as opposed to other acts of worship. Furthermore, these two acts of worship have many things in common and thus, some of the expressions mentioned about prayer are also mentioned with regards to Hajj. This statement of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) that, "Hajj is an arrival into the presence of your Lord" has also been mentioned regarding prayer.[i] This is because prayer is a means of diverting one's attention from other than God and turning towards Him, which is a kind of migration.

The prayer commences with *takbīratul ihrām*, meaning that a person enters the state of *ihrām* by reciting the *takbir*, certain things become prohibited for him thereafter. The beginning of Hajj also begins with wearing the *ihrām* and reciting the *talbiyah*, after which certain things become prohibited for a person.

For certain beneficial reasons, the rituals of Hajj take place in a particular place, just as how prayers must be performed in a particular direction, facing the Ka'bah. In reality, this focus on a specific place in Hajj or in prayers is a means of acquiring true focus, meaning to completely focus one's attention on Allah. These means are important, they must always be preserved.

Some say that Islam is limited to that which is outward and apparent, while others go to the opposite extreme and say religion is only concerned with spiritual relationships and pays no attention to outer affairs. However, the *awliyā'* of religion have not only mentioned the outward responsibilities and etiquettes of Hajj but have also explained the secret and spiritual aspects of it. For example, in Hajj as well as in congregational prayers, believers become aware of each other's circumstances and help one another.

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i. In this same treatise of rights. Refer to the previous right, the right of prayer. (Ed.)

EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT ACTIONS

Every action contains a particular test for a person. The same person who considers himself to be superior, as if he has a special status and position, throws his outward form down on the ground when he prays. By doing so he understands and pays heed to the fact that all beings are nothing in front of Allah. Even though holding social positions is necessary for furthering society's affairs, these positions should not be considered real. Everyone must abase themselves before God. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) describes going to Hajj in the following words:

يَرِدُونَهُ وُرُودَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَ يَأْلَهُونَ إِلَيْهِ وُلُوهَ الْحَمَامِ وَ جَعَلَهُ سُبْحَانَهُ عَلَامَةً لِتَوَاضُعِهِمْ لِعَظَمَتِهِ وَ إِذْعَانِهِمْ لِعِزَّتِهِ

> Like cattle [in groups], people arrive at it [the House of God]. And like birds, they go passionately towards it. And He the Immaculate has made it [Hajj] a symbol of their humility before God's grandeur, and their confessing to His might.[i]

STRENGTHENING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF HAJJ

In order to strengthen one's spiritual connections, one must observe the *akhlāqī* issues that are necessary during this journey. It is never the case that a person's soul can suddenly become humble by travelling to a holy place. This is also the case for prayer. For a person to pay attention to the true reality of prayer, there are preliminaries such as *wudū'* or *tayammum* so that he becomes ready. If these preliminaries are performed correctly, one can attain a level of attention and presence of heart during prayer.

When the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) would perform *wudū'*, their colour would change. When they would stand in prayers, their body would tremble. During Hajj, when they would say

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 1.

'labbayk', they would be in an astonishing state. Mālik ibn Anas says:

> I saw Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), as he was putting on his *iḥrām* his body was trembling. He wanted to say *labbayk*, but he was stuttering and was about to fall down from his steed. I said to him, "O son of the Messenger of God! Why are you in such a state?" The Imam said,
>
> كَيْفَ أَجْسُرُ أَنْ أَقُولَ لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ وَ أَخْشَى أَنْ يَقُولَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لِي لَا لَبَّيْك
>
> "How can I be so bold as to say, '*Labbayk Allāhumma Labbayk*' while I fear that He (the Invincible and Majestic) will say to me, '*Lā Labbayk*' [rejecting my call]!" [i]

Such states indicate a high level of gnosis and understanding. The more a person understands an action and considers who the action is for and who is performing the action, the more that action will be performed with its true reality. Paying attention to these three issues are very valuable because they allow a person to attain real gnosis and understanding.

Believers must humble themselves before entering the secure sanctuary of God. They must remove all their stitched clothing and put on unstitched clothing in order to not be attached to anything. They must say *'labbayk'* so that they are not busy with worldly affairs and its pleasures. When one performs Hajj in this way, then his sins are forgiven, and he becomes like a new-born baby. However, if during *ṭawāf* one is thinking about business and worldly affairs, or even indulging in sin, then he shall not receive these great effects.

Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, 1:167, narration 219

مَا يُعْبَأُ بِمَنْ يَؤُمُّ هَذَا الْبَيْتَ إِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ ثَلَاثُ خِصَالٍ خُلُقٌ يُخَالِقُ بِهِ مَنْ صَحِبَهُ أَوْ حِلْمٌ يَمْلِكُ بِهِ غَضَبَهُ أَوْ وَرَعٌ يَحْجُزُهُ عَنْ مَحَارِمِ اللَّه

There is no point in a person going towards this house [the Ka'bah] when he does not have three qualities: good morals with his companions, tolerance with which he controls his anger, and *wara'* that prevents him from actions prohibited by Allah. [i]

As per the above tradition, the following three qualities make a person's Hajj futile:

1. Not having *wara'*: *Wara'* is a state which keeps a person far from performing sins against God. One of the conditions for all acts of worship to influence a person's soul is *wara'*.

2. Not having tolerance and forbearance, and not being able to control one's anger. This is because being able to tolerate the unpleasant events of Hajj such as the physical hardships and the heat, along with the social difficulties and unpleasant interactions of others, all requires patience and forbearance. If someone was accustomed to being pampered and spoiled, then tolerating these matters will be difficult for him.

3. Not having good morals and not having good interactions with one's companions. If a person is annoyed by someone when he is wearing the *iḥrām*, then he should not abuse them with foul language, get angry with them, or start saying inappropriate things to them. To be able to observe this, one must practice from before.

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 274, no. 2424; al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 12, p. 11, no. 5.

MEETING WITH THE INFALLIBLE IMAM (PEACE BE UPON HIM) IN HAJJ

One of the etiquettes of Hajj is to meet the Imam. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) said:

تَمَامُ الْحَجِّ لِقَاءُ الْإِمَام

The completion of Hajj is in meeting the Imam.[i]

If one wants his Hajj to be complete, then during the time of the Prophet or the Imam's presence, he ought to go meet them and proclaim his adherence and obedience to them. During the time of occultation similarly, if one truly follows the etiquettes of Hajj, then he will meet the Imam of the time (may Allah hasten his reappearance), because the Imam performs Hajj every year. To attain success in this matter, the performer of Hajj must change the glasses of their heart and completely submit themself to the Imam (peace be upon him).

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 4, p. 549, no 2.

12

THE RIGHT OF FASTING

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّوْمِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ حِجَابٌ ضَرَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى لِسَانِكَ وَ سَمْعِكَ وَ بَصَرِكَ وَ فَرْجِكَ وَ بَطْنِكَ لِيَسْتُرَكَ بِهِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَ هَكَذَا جَاءَ فِي الْحَدِيثِ الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ فَإِنْ سَكَنَتْ أَطْرَافُكَ فِي حَجَبَتِهَا رَجَوْتَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مَحْجُوباً وَ إِنْ أَنْتَ تَرَكْتَهَا تَضْطَرِبُ فِي حِجَابِهَا وَ تَرْفَعُ جَنَبَاتِ الْحِجَابِ فَتَطَّلِعُ إِلَى مَا لَيْسَ لَهَا بِالنَّظْرَةِ الدَّاعِيَةِ لِلشَّهْوَةِ وَ الْقُوَّةِ الْخَارِجَةِ عَنْ حَدِّ التَّقِيَّةِ لِلَّهِ لَمْ تَأْمَنْ أَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْحِجَابَ وَ تَخْرُجَ مِنْهُ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of fasting is that you know that it is a veil that Allah has drawn over your tongue, your hearing, your sight, your private parts, and your stomach so that through it He protects you from the Hellfire. In this manner, it has been mentioned in a tradition that, "Fasting is a shield against the Hellfire." So, if your body parts rest under this veil and protection, then be hopeful of them being protected [from the fire of Hell]. But if you let them loose and allow them to be restless under the veil and to lift the sides of the veil, aspiring towards that which is forbidden

> with lustful glances and strength that is beyond the limit of being wary of God, then you shall not be safe from them tearing the veil apart and coming out from under it. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

FASTING, PRACTICE FOR THE RECTIFICATION AND PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

The Divine responsibilities found in the holy *sharī'ah* are not without wisdom and benefit. These wisdoms are mentioned in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) in the form of *akhlāqī* and spiritual matters. Fasting is no exception to this general rule. In addition to having physical benefits, fasting is also extremely effective in the spiritual perfection of a person.

Fasting means that during a particular period of time, a person chooses to refrain from certain things. Thus, fasting also has its own *iḥrām* just like Hajj and prayers, in that certain things have been made to be prohibited. The first level of this *iḥrām*, after making a sincere intention, is to refrain from eating and certain other actions during the day, which are normally permissible. By doing this, a person undergoes a mandatory type of training, an exercise in reforming himself.

The Noble Qur'ān says the following regarding the wisdom behind the obligation of fasting:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

> O you who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting as it was prescribed for those who were before you, so that you may be Godwary. (2:183)

The person who is fasting, due to his faith in the unseen, his belief in the truthfulness of the *sharī'ah's* commandments, and his

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, pp. 258-259.

outward obedience to those commandments is already committed to a certain level of piety. The fact that he is refraining from eating, drinking and other permissible actions when fasting, indicates this obedience. However, by performing the fast correctly and by observing its conditions in an appropriate way, he attains higher levels of piety. Sayyidah Zahrā' al-Marḍiyyah (peace be upon her) says:

فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ الصِّيَامَ تَثْبِيتاً لِلْإِخْلَاص

Allah has made fasting obligatory on a person so that sincerity becomes firm [in his existence].[i]

Unless a believer puts himself through difficult ascetic practices (*riyāḍāt*), hidden spiritual aspects of his existence will not be manifested. Minerals must also undergo certain difficult circumstances if they are to be purified, they must bear the fire's heat so that their impurities are removed. Similarly, what elevates a person is when he attains states of purity, and these states of purity have different levels. One level of attaining purity is by fasting. If a person is attentive while fasting and if—in addition to refraining from eating, drinking and conjugal relations—he also protects his tongue and other body parts from becoming contaminated by lying and committing other prohibited actions, then the impurities of these body parts will be removed from his existence. In this way his fast will itself become a level of praising and glorifying God and the person will be purified because of this action. It is for this reason that permissible actions performed by one who is fasting are given a special reward and are considered to be worship. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

نَوْمُ الصَّائِمِ عِبَادَةٌ وَ نَفَسُهُ تَسْبِيح

The sleep of a person who is fasting is worship, and his breathing is [has the reward of] *taṣbīḥ*.[ii]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 368, no. 47.

ii. al-Barqī, *Al-maḥāsin*, vol. 1, p. 72, no. 148.

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FASTING, WITH REGARDS TO THEIR EFFECTS

In addition to the effects it leaves on a person's body, fasting also has astonishing effects on his soul. In this regard, fasting has overall been classified into four levels:

1. Outward Fasting

The first level is the outward fast which means that a believer refrain from performing that which has been prohibited during fasting. What is intended by prohibitions here are those actions that are incompatible with fasting and whose performance, in addition to invalidating one's fast, also result in punishment. This is because the obligation of fasting entails the prohibition of these actions, and not acting in accordance with this results in *qaḍā* and *kaffārah*. Therefore, the lowest level of fasting is for a person whose stomach was only hungry during his fast, just as it has been said:

كَمْ مِنْ صَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ إِلَّا الظَّمَأُ

> How many a person who fasts yet gains nothing from their fasting except thirst![i]

Such fasting leaves effects that are of an initial level, if performed with the appropriate conditions, then the person shall not face punishment.

2. Fasting of the Body Parts from that Which is Prohibited

The second level is the fast of the body parts. It is befitting that a person practices this, such that in addition to refraining from those actions which invalidate the fast, he also abandons the remaining prohibited actions of his body parts. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 176, no. 3361.

صَوْمُ النَّفْسِ إِمْسَاكُ الْحَوَاسِّ الْخَمْسِ عَنْ سَائِرِ الْمَآثِمِ وَ خُلُوُّ الْقَلْبِ عَنْ جَمِيعِ أَسْبَابِ الشَّر

The fast of the soul means that the five senses abstain from all other sins and the heart is emptied of all causes of evil. [i]

In reality, fasting is a means of disciplining the soul and a person's soul is only truly fasting when it protects the five senses from all kinds of different sins. Elsewhere, Imam 'Alī even refers to fasting as, 'refraining from prohibited actions' [ii] This phrase indicates that if a person was unable to perform the outward fast because of an acceptable excuse, then if he refrains from God's prohibitions and the sins of the body parts, he can still benefit from the effects and spiritual blessings of fasting. It is not the case that he remains altogether deprived of the special benefits of fasting.

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said the following to a Jew when asked about the rewards of fasting:

مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ يَصُومُ شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ احْتِسَاباً إِلَّا أَوْجَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سَبْعَ خِصَالٍ أَوَّلُهَا يَذُوبُ الْحَرَامُ فِي جَسَدِهِ وَ الثَّانِيَةُ يَقْرُبُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَ الثَّالِثَةُ يَكُونُ قَدْ كَفَّرَ خَطِيئَةَ أَبِيهِ آدَم وَ الرَّابِعَةُ يُهَوِّنُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ سَكَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ، وَ الْخَامِسَةُ أَمَانٌ مِنَ

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i. Ibid., no. 3362.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 294, no. 21.

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع فِي بَعْضِ خُطَبِهِ الصِّيَامُ اجْتِنَابُ الْمَحَارِمِ كَمَا يَمْتَنِعُ الرَّجُلُ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَ الشَّرَابِ.

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said in some of his sermons, "Fasting is to refrain from prohibited actions just as how the person [who is fasting] refrains from food and drink."

الْجُوعِ وَ الْعَطَشِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ السَّادِسَةُ يُعْطِيهِ اللَّهُ بَرَاءَةً مِنَ النَّارِ وَ السَّابِعَةُ يُطْعِمُهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ الْجَنَّةِ

There is no believer that fasts the month of Ramadan, seeking Allah's reward, except that Allah grants him seven qualities: The first is that He melts the prohibited [flesh grown from prohibited food] in his body. The second is that he comes near to the mercy of God. The third is that he atones for the sin of his father Ādam. The fourth is that the difficulties of death become easy for him. The fifth is that he shall be secure from the hunger and thirst of the Day of Judgment. The sixth is that Allah grants him exemption from the Hellfire. The seventh is that Allah feeds him from the fruits of Paradise.[i]

3. Observing Akhlāqī Responsibilities While Fasting

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says the following regarding the wisdom of fasting:

تَسْكِيناً لِأَطْرَافِهِمْ وَ تَخْشِيعاً لِأَبْصَارِهِمْ وَ تَذْلِيلًا لِنُفُوسِهِمْ وَ تَخْفِيضاً لِقُلُوبِهِم

...so that [God] relieves their body parts [from sins], makes their eyes humble, makes their souls lowly and meek, and brings their hearts down [from seeking superiority].[ii]

One of the wisdoms behind fasting is to make a person's soul acquire a feeling of humility and lowliness in front of Allah. A person is always attentive to his possessions and this attentiveness—which is independent of and detached from God—is one of the obstacles that prevents a person from having a conscious, deep, and constant humility in front of Allah. Thus, if a person wants to rid himself of this vice, he should perform certain actions to develop humility in

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-amālī*, p. 193.

ii. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 192.

himself. One such action is fasting; it brings about such a state of humility in a person. The body parts being in a state of fasting means that the person strives to perform all his actions with contemplation, and he knows what purpose he has for performing each action. Is he doing it because it is a responsibility or just out of habit? The effect of such fasting is that which Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) says:

...أَنَّ خُلُوفَ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رَائِحَةِ الْمِسْكِ

> The smell of the mouth of one who is fasting, is more pleasant to Allah than the smell of musk.[i]

A person must strive to not only consider the quantity of his good actions but their quality as well. With such consideration and by observing a higher level of self-vigilance, a person can make that same obligatory fast—which is incumbent on him to perform—something more meaningful, with a reality that prepares him for God's banquet. Therefore, first knowing one's responsibility and then acting on it is among the most important actions, as Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّ الصِّيَامَ لَيْسَ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَ الشَّرَابِ وَحْدَهُ ... فَإِذَا صُمْتُمْ فَاحْفَظُوا أَلْسِنَتَكُمْ عَنِ الْكَذِبِ وَ غُضُّوا أَبْصَارَكُمْ وَ لَا تَنَازَعُوا وَ لَا تَحَاسَدُوا وَ لَا تَغْتَابُوا وَ لَا تَمَارَوْا وَ لَا تَكْذِبُوا وَ لَا تُبَاشِرُوا وَ لَا تُخَالِفُوا وَ لَا تُغَاضِبُوا وَ لَا تَسَابُّوا وَ لَا تَشَاتَمُوا ... وَ لَا تَظْلِمُوا وَ لَا تُسَافِهُوا وَ لَا تَضَاجَرُوا وَ لَا تَغْفُلُوا عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ وَ الْزَمُوا الصَّمْتَ وَ السُّكُوتَ وَ الْحِلْمَ وَ الصَّبْرَ وَ الصِّدْقَ ... وَ كُونُوا مُشْرِفِينَ عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ مُنْتَظِرِينَ لِأَيَّامِكُمْ مُنْتَظِرِينَ لِمَا وَعَدَكُمْ اللَّهُ مُتَزَوِّدِينَ لِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ وَ عَلَيْكُمُ السَّكِينَةَ وَ الْوَقَارَ وَ الْخُشُوعَ وَ الْخُضُوعَ وَ ذُلَّ الْعَبْدِ الْخَائِفِ مِنْ مَوْلَاهُ

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 277, no. 26.

رَاجِينَ خَائِفِينَ رَاغِبِينَ رَاهِبِينَ ... فَإِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ كُلَّهُ فَأَنْتَ صَائِمٌ لِلَّهِ بِحَقِيقَةِ صَوْمِهِ صَانِعٌ لِمَا أَمَرَكَ وَ كُلَّمَا نَقَصْتَ مِنْهَا شَيْئاً مِمَّا بَيَّنْتُ لَكَ فَقَدْ نَقَصَ مِنْ صَوْمِكَ بِمِقْدَارِ ذَلِكَ ...

Verily, fasting is not just [refraining] from eating and drinking ... so when you fast, protect your tongue from lying, cast down your gaze [from that which is prohibited to look at], do not fight with one another, do not envy one another, do not backbite, do not dispute with one another, do not take false oaths, [and moreover] do not take true oaths. Do not [unnecessarily] oppose each other, do not enrage each other, do not use bad language, do not abuse ... do not oppress, do not behave ignorantly, do not get irritated, and do not be neglectful of the remembrance of God and the prayer. Be silent [regarding that which ought not to be said], have forbearance, be patient, be truthful ... and consider yourself to be on the verge of the hereafter. Await the coming of your days [the relief, that is the reappearance of the Qā'im], await that which Allah has promised you [the rewards of the hereafter], and take up the provisions [of righteous actions] for the meeting of Allah [the journey to the hereafter]. It is incumbent on you to have a tranquil heart, a composed body, humility, submissiveness, brokenness, and meekness just like a servant who fears his master. Be fearful [of God's chastisement] and be hopeful [of His mercy] ... If you perform all of that [which I said], then you have truly fasted for Allah and obeyed His command, and to whatever extent you decrease from those matters that I mentioned, to that same extent your fast too will decrease [in virtue and in reward] ...[i]

Therefore, one of the levels of fasting is to observe the *akhlāqī* and other responsibilities that a person has.

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 10, p. 166, no. 13.

4. Fasting of the Heart

There are many ways for a person to gain proximity to God and reach Him. One such way is fasting. In particular, this is the case with that fasting in which a person is also extremely vigilant over his heart and soul, after already being vigilant and monitoring the actions of his body parts and the higher *akhlāqī* responsibilities he has. Such an individual must not even think about sinning, devise a plan to sin, or cause a moral vice in himself. In this manner, the preliminaries gradually come about for his heart and its attachments to acquire a Divine direction. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

الْقَلْبُ حَرَمُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تُسْكِنْ حَرَمَ اللَّهِ غَيْرَ اللَّه

> The heart is the sanctuary of Allah, so do not allow anyone other than Allah in the sanctuary of Allah.[i]

A person is never safe from the danger of sinning. In fact, in order to be tested, insinuations to sin always arise in a person. However, if he pays heed to these insinuations when they arise, they turn into thoughts about sin and if such thinking continues, it results in preparing the preliminaries of sin and eventually committing the sin itself. Even though thinking about sinning itself is not a sin, it causes darkness in the heart. That's why Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

صِيَامُ الْقَلْبِ عَنِ الْفِكْرِ فِي الْآثَامِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ صِيَامِ الْبَطْنِ عَنِ الطَّعَام

> The fasting of the heart from thinking about sins is superior to the fasting of the stomach from food.[ii]

If a person, apart from observing the obligatory conditions of fasting, also pays attention to its *akhlāqī* conditions, then gradually the effects of this worship will penetrate his soul, and his thinking will also begin to fast. This results in the person attaining higher

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 76, p. 25.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 176, no. 3365.

levels of fasting. A characteristic of fasting is that a person's soul grows and becomes capable of developing a connection with his Lord. Thus, every level of fasting has a reward. As per a tradition of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) Allah says:

الصَّوْمُ لِي وَ أَنَا أَجْزِي عَلَيْه

Fasting is for Me, and I am its reward. [i]

There are some who are not given rewards equal to their actions, rather they are given rewards higher than their actions. These are *mukhlaṣīn* (the purified ones), about whom the Noble Qur'ān says:

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

And you will only be requited for what you used to do.
Except Allah's servants, the *mukhlaṣīn*. (37:39-40)

Even though the reward of an action on the Day of Judgment is normally nothing other than that action itself, the *mukhlaṣīn* have a higher status than that. A person can attain such a reward by giving depth to his fasting and reaching this fourth level. However, this level is a difficult one. One ought to practice the lower levels first in order to become strong, and then gradually a person's thinking will be deflected away from everything other than God. When a person attains a fast with such depth, it produces very lofty effects. God Himself directly takes charge of rewarding such a fast as was said in the previously mentioned tradition. When the heart becomes luminous, the veils between the one who is fasting, and Allah, are removed. Fasting, whose main characteristic is abstinence, is an action free from impurities. If this abstinence from contaminations becomes deeper and if the fasting individual becomes pure from *akhlāqī* impurities as well as those related to thoughts, then its result will be that a person becomes pure from any kind of attention to other than God in all the different inclinations of his soul.

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 4, p. 63, no. 6.

THE REALITY OF FASTING

In reality, fasting is a kind of refrainment and purification of the soul from impurities. By fasting, a person becomes like the angels of God because they too do not eat and drink, their food is the remembrance of God. If a person truly fasts, then his breathing is glorification of God and his movements and sleep are all worship,[i] and that is why he is placed in the category of angels. In this way, gradually the veils between him and his Lord are lifted, the same veils which are described as follows in the sayings of the Infallibles:

... أَنَّكَ لَا تَحْجُبُ عَنْ خَلْقِكَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَحْجُبَهُمُ الْأَعْمَالُ دُونَكَ

> ... [O God] You are not veiled from Your creation! Rather, it is their actions that they perform for other than You that veils them from You [such that they do not comprehend You as You are].[ii]

The Noble Qur'ān metaphorically addresses us, saying that you sit beside a dying person and cry due to losing them, but know that We are nearer to them than you![iii] This means that while you apparently lose your near ones, the reality is that you are far from Us and are negligent of Us, We are nearer to them.

Therefore, as a person performs acts of worship with more care and a higher level of quality, slowly and gradually he acquires insight. Eventually those same levels of monotheism that he believes in are gradually manifested through his heart's gnosis.

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 10, p. 313, no. 20.

أَنْفَاسُكُمْ فِيهِ تَسْبِيحٌ وَ نَوْمُكُمْ فِيهِ عِبَادَةٌ

Your breath [in the month of Ramadan] is glorification of Allah, and your sleep is worship.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 91, p. 310.

iii. Qur'ān 56:85.

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THE RIGHT OF CHARITY

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّدَقَةِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا ذُخْرُكَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَ وَدِيعَتُكَ الَّتِي لَا تَحْتَاجُ إِلَى الْإِشْهَادِ فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ بِمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَهُ سِرّاً أَوْثَقَ بِمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَهُ عَلَانِيَةً وَ كُنْتَ جَدِيراً أَنْ تَكُونَ أَسْرَرْتَ إِلَيْهِ أَمْراً أَعْلَنْتَهُ وَ كَانَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَهُ فِيهَا سِرّاً عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ وَ لَمْ تَسْتَظْهِرْ عَلَيْهِ فِيمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَهُ مِنْهَا بِإِشْهَادِ الْأَسْمَاعِ وَ الْأَبْصَارِ عَلَيْهِ بِهَا كَأَنَّهَا أَوْثَقُ فِي نَفْسِكَ لَا كَأَنَّكَ لَا تَثِقُ بِهِ فِي تَأْدِيَةِ وَدِيعَتِكَ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَمْتَنَّ بِهَا عَلَى أَحَدٍ لِأَنَّهَا لَكَ فَإِذَا امْتَنَنْتَ بِهَا لَمْ تَأْمَنْ أَنْ تَكُونَ بِهَا مِثْلَ تَهْجِينِ حَالِكَ مِنْهَا إِلَى مَنْ مَنَنْتَ بِهَا عَلَيْهِ لِأَنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ دَلِيلًا عَلَى أَنَّكَ لَمْ تُرِدْ نَفْسَكَ بِهَا وَ لَوْ أَرَدْتَ نَفْسَكَ بِهَا لَمْ تَمْتَنَّ بِهَا عَلَى أَحَدٍ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of charity is that you know that it is your saving with your Lord, and your trust that you have deposited for which you do not need witnesses. So, when you know this, you will be more confident in that which you deposit in secret than that which you deposit in public. It

is befitting that you keep hidden whatever you intended to give openly, so that it remains a secret between you and Him in all situations. When giving, do not seek help from the witnessing of other eyes and ears, as if you are more confident with that, and as if you are unconfident that your deposit will be returned to you. And do not make the one you give to feel obliged, because the charity is for yourself. If you make them feel obliged, then you are not safe from being afflicted with the same difficulty that they are afflicted with. Also, doing so indicates that you did not perform that charity for yourself. If you had performed it for yourself, you would not have made anyone feel obliged. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE NECESSITY OF PAYING ATTENTION TO THE REALITY OF CHARITY (*SADAQAH*)

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī (may Allah have mercy on him) defines charity as being any spending performed for the sake of God, regardless of whether it is obligatory such as *zakāt* and *khums*, or whether it is recommended.[ii]

Among a person's various social relationships, the foremost relationship which gives form to the social system and strengthens it, is a sound economic relationship. Human beings have rights that are incumbent on one another with regards to their financial relationships. Every believer is responsible when it comes to the affairs of others and that is why some of the obligatory actions of the *sharīʿah* pertain to financial matters such as *zakāt* and *khums*.

According to Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), the right of charity is first that one recognizes what the reality of charity is. Even though charity apparently causes a person to remove something from his possession and give it to another needy individual, its reality is something else. Its reality is that it is a provision and a depositing

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 259.

ii. al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 2, p. 397.

with Allah that does not require any witness. Apparently, a person loses something by engaging in this financial action, and the charity—that he gives as an obligatory or recommended action to a poor person—apparently leaves his ownership and enters the ownership of another. Despite this, one must recognize the fact that this wealth does not come out of God's real ownership, rather it remains stored with Him.

God's ownership of things is real, meaning that every being, regardless of its level of existence, is no exception to God's real control and His existential rule. All beings created by God have descended from the Divine unseen realm and possess no independent existence. They are all manifested from His unlimited perfections.

وَإِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِندَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ

> There is not a thing but that its sources [treasures] are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure. (15:21)

The entire world of existence—which according to our scientific calculations is infinite—has emanated from the Divine Essence. Hence, real ownership belongs exclusively to Him. This means that all beings have nothing from themselves, whatever they have is from Allah. However, to establish a social system, we assume certain kinds of ownership. Religion has also legislated certain rulings based on these social relationships. One such ruling is the necessity of helping the weak and the destitute. This understanding of reality allows believers to establish social and economic relationships correctly, with precision and based on faith. The entire idea that something is wealth that is owned and has an owner, and that a person can then acquire this wealth in this world and attribute it to himself, is all temporary.

In reality, charity is a sort of trade with God that incurs profit in this world and in the hereafter. As is narrated from Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him):

إِذَا أَمْلَقْتُمْ فَتَاجِرُوا اللَّهَ بِالصَّدَقَة

Whenever you become poor, trade with God through charity.[i]

In conclusion, one ought to bear in mind that a person's possessions never decrease by giving charity. As has been narrated from Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far, who was narrating from his ancestors (peace be upon them) who themselves narrated from the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

مَا نَقَصَ مَالٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ قَطُّ فَأَعْطُوا وَ لَا تَجْبُنُوا

Wealth never decreases through charity, so give and don't be afraid.[ii]

CHARITY, THE PURIFIER OF THE HUMAN

The Noble Qur'ān says:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم بِهَا

Take charity [the obligatory *zakāt*] from their possessions to cleanse them and purify them thereby. (9:103)

Meaning that man is purified by means of giving charity. Look at what a great favour has been bestowed on us!

Incorrect notions can arise in a person's point of view, due to considering this world as being independent from Allah. For example, he says, "I earned this through my efforts", "I went through difficulties", "I sweated for it", or "I tolerated the heat and cold." In all of these we see him saying the word I! Such an outlook contaminates a person, makes him self-centred and results in the vice of stinginess.

Over time, the soul of a stingy individual who cannot part with his wealth or share his knowledge and possessions with others, further contracts and his attachments become stronger. When these

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 258.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 131.

possessions are wrested from him due to an event such as a flood, earthquake, bankruptcy, or death, he realizes that he was attached to something transient that has now been lost! This reality is manifested on the Day of Judgment:

يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ ۖ هَٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ

> On the day when these [the gold and silver that was hoarded] shall be heated in the Hellfire and therewith branded on their foreheads, their sides, and their backs [and they will be told]: "This is what you treasured up for yourselves! So, taste what you have treasured!" (9:35)

It is as if the wealth one accumulates speaks to him saying, "You did not have any real effect on me, but I will have a real effect on you and afflict you with pain and suffering." It is charity that purifies a person so that he does not attribute everything to himself, rather he pays attention to this reality that wealth which is truly owned by Allah has temporarily become his. By giving charity he returns this wealth to the real ownership of Allah. Through such attention a person is purified, the attachments of his existence are rectified, and they are directed correctly. If these attachments and relationships are developed with such a perspective in mind, what a great influence it would have on the soul of the one who gives charity!

When Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) wanted to give charity, he would first kiss the hand of the beggar and smell the money. He was asked, "Why do you do that?" In response, he said:

لِأَنَّهَا تَقَعُ فِي يَدِ اللَّهِ قَبْلَ يَدِ الْعَبْد

> Because the charity first reaches God's hands and then hands of the poor.[i]

The Noble Qur'ān has different expressions to motivate people

i. al-Baḥrānī, *Tafsīr al-burhān*, vol. 2, p. 838.

in this regard:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ

Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts the repentance of His servants and receives the charities? (9:104)

EFFECTS OF CHARITY

Both obligatory and recommended acts of charity have many benefits, some of which are:

1. Abundant rewards in the hereafter. It has been narrated from the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

أَلَا وَ مَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ فَلَهُ بِوَزْنِ كُلِّ دِرْهَمٍ مِثْلُ جَبَلِ أُحُدٍ مِنْ نَعِيمِ الْجَنَّةِ

Be informed that whoever spends in charity, for the weight of every dirham he shall have from the blessings of Paradise equivalent to the mountain of Uḥud.[i]

2. An unfavourable death is repelled because of giving charity in public.[ii]

3. The fire of God's anger is extinguished because of giving charity in secret.[iii]

4. Shayṭān's back is broken.[iv]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 115.

ii. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 9, p. 387, no. 3.

قال رسول الله ص: إِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ تَدْفَعُ مِيتَةَ السَّوْءِ عَنِ الْإِنْسَانِ

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Verily charity repels bad death from a person."

iii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 181.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص الصَّدَقَةُ فِي السِّرِّ تُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ تَعَالَى

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Giving charity in secret extinguishes the anger of the Exalted Lord."

iv. Ibid., vol. 66, p. 403.

5. A person's lifespan increases. [i]
6. An increase in sustenance and an end to a person's poverty. [ii] [iii]
7. It is a treatment and medicine for those who are sick. [iv]
8. Protection from being destroyed. [v]
9. It causes the cities to prosper. [vi]

عَنْ عَلِيٍّ ع قَالَ: ...قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص ... الصَّدَقَةُ تَكْسِرُ ظَهْرَه

It is narrated from Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) that he said, "... the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said '... charity breaks his (Shayṭān's) back.'"

i. Ibid., vol. 93, p. 119.

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع قَالَ: الْبِرُّ وَ الصَّدَقَةُ ... يَزِيدَانِ فِي الْعُمُر

It is narrated from Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) that he said, "Good actions and charity ... increase one's age."

ii. Ibid., vol. 93, p. 120.

قال امير المومنين ع: اسْتَنْزِلُوا الرِّزْقَ بِالصَّدَقَةِ

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) said, "Seek the descent of your sustenance through charity."

iii. Ibid., vol. 93, p. 119.

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع قَالَ: الْبِرُّ وَ الصَّدَقَةُ يَنْفِيَانِ الْفَقْر

It is narrated from Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) that he said, "Good actions and charity remove poverty."

iv. Ibid., vol. 93, p. 120.

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع دَاوُوا مَرْضَاكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَة

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) said, "Treat your sick through charity."

v. Ibid., vol. 93, p. 124.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ: مَنْ تَصَدَّقَ فِي يَوْمٍ أَوْ لَيْلَةٍ ...دَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عَنْهُ الْهَدْم

It is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) that he said, "If one gives charity during the day or the night... Allah the Mighty and Majestic repels destruction from him."

vi. al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 388.

قَالَ رسولُ الله ص: إِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ وَ صِلَةَ الرَّحِمِ تُعَمِّرَانِ الدِّيَارَ وَ تَزِيدَانِ فِي الْأَعْمَار

10. It can even lift away a definite heavenly decree.[i]
11. Protection from calamities.

It is narrated from Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) that:

ظَهَرَ فِي بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَحْطٌ شَدِيدٌ سِنِينَ مُتَوَاتِرَةً وَ كَانَ عِنْدَ امْرَأَةٍ لُقْمَةٌ مِنْ خُبْزٍ فَوَضَعَتْهَا فِي فِيهَا لِتَأْكُلَ فَنَادَى السَّائِلُ يَا أَمَةَ اللَّهِ الْجُوعُ فَقَالَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ أَتَصَدَّقُ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الزَّمَانِ فَأَخْرَجَتْهَا مِنْ فِيهَا فَدَفَعَتْهَا إِلَى السَّائِلِ وَ كَانَ لَهَا وَلَدٌ صَغِيرٌ يَحْطِبُ فِي الصَّحْرَاءِ فَجَاءَ الذِّئْبُ فَاحْتَمَلَهُ فَوَقَعَتِ الصَّيْحَةُ فَعَدَتِ الْأُمُّ فِي أَثَرِ الذِّئْبِ فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى جَبْرَئِيلَ ع فَأَخْرَجَ الْغُلَامَ مِنْ فَمِ الذِّئْبِ فَدَفَعَهُ إِلَى أُمِّهِ فَقَالَ لَهَا جَبْرَئِيلُ ع يَا أَمَةَ اللَّهِ أَ رَضِيتِ لُقْمَةً بِلُقْمَةٍ.

There was a time when the Banī Isrā'īl underwent a severe famine for successive years. During this time, a woman once had a morsel of bread that she put in her mouth to eat. At that moment, a beggar cried out, "O slave of Allah. Hunger!" The woman said [to herself], "How can I give in charity during such a time?" Nonetheless, she took the bread out of her mouth and gave it to the beggar. This woman had a small child who was gathering firewood in the desert, and he was attacked by a wolf. [The wolf took the child in its mouth and ran off.] The mother went running after her child and was wailing. At this point, Allah sent Jibra'īl who took the child out from the wolf's mouth and gave him to the mother and said, "O slave

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The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Charity and *ṣilat al-raḥim* (maintaining family ties) make cities prosper and increases age."

i. Ibid.

الصَّدَقَةُ تَدْفَعُ الْقَضَاءَ الْمُبْرَمَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ

Charity repels definite heavenly decree.

of Allah! Are you happy? This morsel is in exchange for that morsel."[i]

12. It shuts seventy doors of badness and evil.[ii]

DANGERS OF CHARITY

One of the things that wipes out the effects of charity is to make the receiver of the charity feel obliged. This has matter has even been mentioned in the Qur'ān.[iii]

It is also necessary that a person give charity to the correct causes, and in this regard, it is necessary to investigate where the money is going. It has been mentioned in some traditions that various things are wasted, one of them is the charity which is given to a person who is not entitled to it.[iv]

Also, charity must not be given to such an extent that the giver himself becomes afflicted with poverty. As Allah has said:

... وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا

... nor stretch it [your hand in giving] forth to its utmost reach, so that you become blameworthy and destitute. (17:29)

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-aʿmāl*, p. 140.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 132.

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ص الصَّدَقَةُ تَسُدُّ سَبْعِينَ بَاباً مِنَ الشَّر

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Charity closes seventy doors of evil."

iii. Qur'ān 2:264.

iv. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 263, no. 142.

أَرْبَعَةٌ يَذْهَبْنَ ضَيَاعاً الْبَذْرُ فِي السَّبَخَةِ وَ السِّرَاجُ فِي الْقَمَرِ وَ الْأَكْلُ عَلَى الشِّبَعِ وَ الْمَعْرُوفُ إِلَى مَنْ لَيْسَ بِأَهْلِهِ

Four things are lost in a futile way, planting in a saline plane, using a light on a moonlit night, eating when full, and doing good to someone who is not worthy.

EXPANDING THE MEANING OF CHARITY

Even though the word charity (*ṣadaqah*) is generally used with regards to spending wealth, the Imams (peace be upon them) have mentioned other instances of charity to encourage believers to perform righteous actions and attain their effects in this world, in the hereafter, and in the soul of a person. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

إِنَّ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ صَدَقَة

It is incumbent on every Muslim that he gives charity every day.

He was asked, "Who has the ability to do that?" The Prophet said:

إِمَاطَتُكَ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ صَدَقَةٌ وَ إِرْشَادُكَ الرَّجُلَ إِلَى الطَّرِيقِ صَدَقَةٌ وَ عِيَادَتُكَ الْمَرِيضَ صَدَقَةٌ وَ أَمْرُكَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ صَدَقَةٌ وَ نَهْيُكَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ صَدَقَةٌ وَ رَدُّكَ السَّلَامَ صَدَقَةٌ

To remove what is hurtful [such as thorns] from the road is charity, to guide somebody towards a path is charity, to visit the sick is charity, to enjoin good is charity, to forbid evil is charity, and to reply to someone's greeting is charity.[i]

Elsewhere, he also said:

تَرْكُ الشَّرِّ صَدَقَةٌ

To not do bad to others is charity.[ii]

And:

كُلُّ مَعْرُوفٍ صَدَقَة

Every righteous action is charity.[iii]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 72, p. 50.

ii. Ibid., vol. 77, p. 388, no. 1

iii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 134, no. 145.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

صَدَقَةٌ يُحِبُّهَا اللَّهُ إِصْلَاحٌ بَيْنِ النَّاسِ إِذَا تَفَاسَدُوا وَ تَقَارُبٌ بَيْنِهِمْ إِذَا تَبَاعَدُوا

A charity that Allah loves is to reconcile people when there is discord between them, and to bring them close when they have become distanced from one another. [i]

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 209, no. 1.

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THE RIGHT OF THE RITUAL SACRIFICE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْهَدْيِ فَأَنْ تُخْلِصَ بِهَا الْإِرَادَةَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ وَ التَّعَرُّضَ لِرَحْمَتِهِ وَ قَبُولِهِ وَ لَا تُرِيدَ عُيُونَ النَّاظِرِينَ دُونَهُ فَإِذَا كُنْتَ كَذَلِكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ مُتَكَلِّفاً وَ لَا مُتَصَنِّعاً وَ كُنْتَ إِنَّمَا تَقْصِدُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ اعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُرَادُ بِالْيَسِيرِ وَ لَا يُرَادُ بِالْعَسِيرِ كَمَا أَرَادَ بِخَلْقِهِ التَّيْسِيرَ وَ لَمْ يُرِدْ بِهِمُ التَّعْسِيرَ وَ كَذَلِكَ التَّذَلُّلُ أَوْلَى بِكَ مِنَ التَّدَهْقُنِ لِأَنَّ الْكُلْفَةَ وَ الْمَئُونَةَ فِي الْمُتَدَهْقِنِينَ فَأَمَّا التَّذَلُّلُ وَ التَّمَسْكُنُ فَلَا كُلْفَةَ فِيهِمَا وَ لَا مَئُونَةَ عَلَيْهِمَا لِأَنَّهُمَا الْخِلْقَةُ وَ هُمَا مَوْجُودَانِ فِي الطَّبِيعَةِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the ritual sacrifice is that by means of it you sincerely desire your Lord, and desire to be exposed to His mercy and acceptance, and that you do not intend that anyone but Him witness it. If you are such, then you will not show off and feign, rather you will only seek Allah. Know that God can be intended with ease, and He is not intended through difficulty, in the same way that He intends ease for His creation, not difficulty. Also,

humility is more befitting for you than making a show of your greatness because those who make a show of their greatness put themselves in difficulty. This is while showing humility and neediness [before Allah] has no difficulty in it because these two traits are part of a person's innate disposition, and they exist in the nature [of a person]. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE CONDITION OF THE RITUAL SACRIFICE'S ACCEPTANCE

One of the pillars of the obligatory Hajj is the ritual sacrifice. In the past, most pilgrims would bring an animal to sacrifice from their respective cities. Bringing different kinds of animals for sacrifice—such as cows or camels—was an outward display, and thus there was the possibility of pilgrims being afflicted with ostentation (*riyā'*). Therefore, in addition to the apparent conditions of the ritual sacrifice, a fundamental condition for its acceptance is the sincere intention of gaining proximity to God. Of course, such an intention is a condition in all acts of worship, including the Hajj.

In this part of the treatise, after mentioning this condition, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) goes on to say that God, out of His grace towards His servants, has not given difficult commandments to them. Just as how God's creation of a person happened with ease, a person can be attentive to Him and seek Him through obeying easy commandments. After creating the human, God expects him to show humility and lowliness in His presence. In fact, the very creation is itself a representation of the created being's lowliness and humility in front of its creator.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, pp. 259-260.

THE SOCIAL RIGHTS OF THOSE WHO HOLD AUTHORITY

15
THE RIGHT OF THE RULER

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ جُعِلْتَ لَهُ فِتْنَةً وَ أَنَّهُ مُبْتَلًى فِيكَ بِمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ لَهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ السُّلْطَانِ وَ أَنْ تُخْلِصَ لَهُ فِي النَّصِيحَةِ وَ أَنْ لَا تُمَاحِكَهُ وَ قَدْ بُسِطَتْ يَدُهُ عَلَيْكَ فَتَكُونَ سَبَبَ هَلَاكِ نَفْسِكَ وَ هَلَاكِهِ وَ تَذَلَّلْ وَ تَلَطَّفْ لِإِعْطَائِهِ مِنَ الرِّضَا مَا يَكُفُّهُ عَنْكَ وَ لَا يُضِرُّ بِدِينِكَ وَ تَسْتَعِينُ عَلَيْهِ فِي ذَلِكَ بِاللَّهِ وَ لَا تُعَازَّهِ وَ لَا تُعَانِدْهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ عَقَقْتَهُ وَ عَقَقْتَ نَفْسَكَ فَعَرَّضْتَهَا لِمَكْرُوهِهِ وَ عَرَّضْتَهُ لِلْهَلَكَةِ فِيكَ وَ كُنْتَ خَلِيقاً أَنْ تَكُونَ مُعِيناً لَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ وَ شَرِيكاً لَهُ فِيمَا أَتَى إِلَيْكَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

The right of the one who manages your affairs through power and authority is that you know that you have been made to be a trial for him, and that he is being tested through you due to the authority Allah gave him. Thus, you should sincerely advise him, and not quarrel with him, for he has dominion over you, and by doing so you shall be the cause of your own destruction as well as his. Show humility and softness by consenting and being pleased

> with what he gives you, so that he leaves you alone and does not harm your religion. In addition, seek Allah's help in this regard. Do not oppose and stubbornly resist him, for if you do that then you have disrespected him and yourself. Moreover, you have exposed yourself to his detestable behaviour and exposed him to destruction. It befits you to assist him in his authority over you, and to be his partner in that which he gives you. And there is no strength except with Allah. [i]

RULERSHIP AS PER THE INTELLECT AND *SHARĪʿAH*

In these luminous words, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has focused on one pivotal point: sincerely worshipping God. This sincere worship is God's great right on the human being and is only fulfilled when a person performs the various responsibilities that he has in all different aspects of his life. Therefore, one who wishes to remain on the path of God's servitude must move forward as per God's will. This must be kept in mind whilst also realizing that a person is a social being and society imposes certain responsibilities on him. In fact, most of a person's responsibilities—be they related to his actions or related to his *akhlāq*—are social in nature. It is for this reason that Islam has given special importance to the various types of social responsibilities. In Islam's view, self-building and the purification of one's soul is not something detached from society and social life.

One of a person's social needs is the issue of rulership. To be able to attain their rights, human beings need a political and governing system with a ruler at its head. This is a commonly understood and rational matter which has been pointed out by the *awliyāʾ* of religion as well. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 260.

إِنَّهُ لَا بُدَّ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ أَمِيرٍ بَرٍّ أَوْ فَاجِرٍ يَعْمَلُ فِي إِمْرَتِهِ الْمُؤْمِنُ وَ يَسْتَمْتِعُ فِيهَا الْكَافِرُ

Verily, a ruler is necessary for people, regardless of whether he is righteous or an evil doer. Under his rulership, the believers act [continue upon the right path], and the disbelievers enjoy [their worldly life].[i]

The Imam is indicating that due to the presence of a ruler who has taken up the responsibility of governing, everybody can live their lives with their own rights guaranteed. Disorder and anarchy will not take place. However, without such rulership and government, fighting, bloodshed and premature death will arise. To prevent such crimes from occurring, a government must be at the head of society.

يُبَلِّغُ اللَّهُ فِيهَا الْأَجَلَ وَ يُجْمَعُ بِهِ الْفَيْءُ وَ يُقَاتَلُ بِهِ الْعَدُوُّ وَ تَأْمَنُ بِهِ السُّبُلُ وَ يُؤْخَذُ بِهِ لِلضَّعِيفِ مِنَ الْقَوِيِّ حَتَّى يَسْتَرِيحَ بَرٌّ وَ يُسْتَرَاحَ مِنْ فَاجِرٍ

[Under his rulership] Allah makes the time of [the believer and the unbeliever's] life come to an end, through him the spoils of war are collected, the enemies are fought, the roadways are protected, the rights of the weak are taken from the strong, until the righteous believers live with ease and people are protected from the evil of the evildoers.[ii]

Of course, it cannot be deduced from Imam 'Alī's (peace be upon him) saying that the prophets and the Infallibles (peace be upon them) have no responsibility of forming a just government. Rather, what the Imam meant was that society should not be without a ruler. Every society—be it small or big, be it a tribal society or a feudal one—requires a ruler under whose rule people can lead an appropriate life in this world. Allah says:

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 40.

ii. Ibid.

يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ

O Dāwūd! Indeed, We have made you a vicegerent on the earth. So, judge between people with justice. (38:26)

A PERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN A NON-ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT

The best government is that of the prophets of Allah. One who lives under their rule and obeys their commands, attains the felicity of this world and the next. However, if such a government has not been established, then should the social system be left to disintegrate? If a person lives in a place where the rulers are disbelievers, what must he do? Today most countries are like this. Even though they may be Muslim by name, true Islam and true Muslims are not in power. In such conditions, if the believers living there are not strong enough to establish a religious government, what responsibilities do they have? The Imam says that in such a situation, a person has certain responsibilities. In addition, the Qur'ān has also mentioned responsibilities of believers in this regard.

The first responsibility of a believer is that he should invite others to the truth whenever possible. The primary responsibility of Allah's prophets till the end of their lives was to invite people to the truth. At times, this was done with strength and at other times with softness. Naturally, at the onset of their mission the prophets would mostly work with softness:

قُلْ هَٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ

Say, "This is my way. I summon to Allah with insight..." (12:108)

Thus, the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and the Muslims never began any battle without first inviting the enemy to the truth. In the battle of Badr, which was the first official battle between the Muslims and the polytheists, the

Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) first admonished the enemy. He sent companions of his to admonish the enemy. It was only when the argument had been completely presented to the enemy and they still insisted on starting the war, that he and his companions defended themselves. Also, in the battle of Nahrawān, which was another battle between truth and falsehood, Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) first sent Ibn ʿAbbās to admonish the Khawārij. Due to his admonition, approximately four thousand individuals left their camp.

Therefore, to the extent that conditions necessitate, and to the extent that one can, inviting to the truth is a priority. When the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) could not openly invite people to the truth for three years, he would still do so in private. Moreover, when the conditions became available, he began to openly call people to Islam. These are different manners of conduct (*sīrah*) that the Infallibles manifested in their lives, and they must be followed in different situations.

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that the right of the ruler in whose hands is the governance of your affairs, is that you should know you are a trial and a test for him, and that he shall be tested regarding those individuals who live under his rule. Some people may not believe in the true religion of Allah, but they still act in accordance with a respect of people's rights. Believers can live in a better way under such governments. When the early Muslim community in Makkah decided to migrate, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told them to go to Abyssinia, for the ruler there was just, and they would live comfortably under his rule. The believers were able to freely protect their beliefs there, perform righteous actions, and even propagate their beliefs. Such was their freedom that Jaʿfar ibn Abī Tālib (peace be upon him) openly presented the logic of Islam in front of the ruler of Abyssinia, which resulted in him being impressed by Islam.[i]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 18, p. 410.

On the other hand, under the rulership of tyrants who do not tolerate belief and even prohibit belief from developing, *taqiyyah* is extremely important.[i] The importance of *taqiyyah* is seen in the Qur'ān, which enjoins believers to protect the beliefs of their faith by any means necessary. When a group of Muslims are in a place with no option but to stay there and develop their faith, in such a situation there is no problem in performing *taqiyyah* even if it entails that they make themselves appear to be disbelievers. Allah says:

لَّا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِن دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَن تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً ۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

> The faithful should not take the faithless for allies instead of the faithful, and Allah will have nothing to do with those who do that, except when you are wary of them, out of caution. Allah warns you to beware of [disobeying] Him, and towards Allah is the return. (3:28)

Some people have a notion that *taqiyyah* is fabricated by one of the Islamic sects and is not really a part of Islam. They accuse the Shī'ah of performing *taqiyyah* and say *taqiyyah* means to act in opposition to the truth. The reality is that the complete meaning of *taqiyyah* is not to act in opposition the truth. *Taqiyyah* means that a believer makes his outward appearance seem like it matches that of the government. In the above verse Allah says that so long as there are other believers, you must not seek to be allies with the disbelievers. Those who do so have no relationship with God unless they do so in a state of fearing the disbelievers. This state of fear means that the believers fear if they were to reveal their beliefs they would be massacred and annihilated, while their annihilation would yield no benefit.

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i. *Taqiyyah* is a noun derived from the root verb *waqaya*. Linguistically it means to exercise restraint and caution. As an Islamic term, it refers to dissimulating and hiding one's beliefs to protect oneself. (Ed.)

During the advent of Islam, the polytheists of Makkah arrested the parents of ʿAmmār, the eminent companion of the Prophet and Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon them). They asked them, "Are you Muslims?" Since ʿAmmār's parents were not aware of a way out of the situation, they revealed their belief and were martyred in the most atrocious way. When ʿAmmār witnessed this scene, he outwardly disassociated himself from the Prophet and pretended that he was not a Muslim. By doing this, he sought to save his life. However, after some time, he felt bad and said to himself, "I fear I may have lost my faith!" In this situation, the following verse was revealed:

مَن كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَٰكِن مَّن شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

> Excepting someone who is compelled [to recant his faith] while his heart is at rest in it, those who disbelieve in Allah after [affirming] their faith and open up their breasts to unfaith, Allah's wrath shall be upon them and there is a great punishment for them. (16:106)

Today this issue has also been mentioned in international rights. If a believer can infiltrate the government of a tyrannical ruler such that he is able to protect the rights of believers or other oppressed individuals, then he ought to do that. Sometimes, this can even become obligatory on him, and is authorized by the Imam. ʿAlī ibn Yaqtīn sought the permission of Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (peace be upon him) to resign from the ministry of Hārūn. In response the Imam said:

لَا تَفْعَلْ فَإِنَّ لَنَا بِكَ أُنْساً وَ لِإِخْوَانِكَ بِكَ عِزّاً وَ عَسَى أَنْ يَجْبُرَ اللَّهُ بِكَ كَسْراً وَ يَكْسِرَ بِكَ نَائِرَةَ الْمُخَالِفِينَ عَنْ أَوْلِيَائِهِ يَا عَلِيُّ كَفَّارَةُ أَعْمَالِكُمُ الْإِحْسَانُ إِلَى إِخْوَانِكُمْ اضْمَنْ لِي

وَاحِدَةً وَ أَضْمَنَ لَكَ ثَلاثاً اضْمَنْ لِي أَنْ لَا تَلْقَى أَحَداً مِنْ أَوْلِيَائِنَا إِلَّا قَضَيْتَ حَاجَتَهُ وَ أَكْرَمْتَهُ وَ أَضْمَنَ لَكَ أَنْ لَا يُظِلَّكَ سَقْفُ سِجْنٍ أَبَداً وَ لَا يَنَالَكَ حَدُّ سَيْفٍ أَبَداً وَ لَا يَدْخُلَ الْفَقْرُ بَيْتَكَ أَبَدا

> Do not do that, for verily we have an attachment and familiarity with you, and it is through you [by means of your work in the court of Hārūn] that your brothers in religion have honour and respect. Perchance Allah will repel a difficulty through you or extinguish the fire of the opponents' hatred towards His *awliyā'*. O 'Alī! The compensation of your action [working in the court of an unjust ruler] is to do goodness to your brothers in religion. If you guarantee one thing for me, I shall guarantee three things for you. Guarantee that you will not meet any of our *awliyā'* except that you show them respect and fulfil their needs, and in return I guarantee that you will never be under the roof of a prison, nor will the sharpness of a sword ever reach your body, nor will poverty ever enter your house...[i]

Therefore, the conditions of *taqiyyah* must be observed. The Imams (peace be upon them) have commanded their followers that if they are unable to establish a religious government—in which the ruler is proficient in the *fiqhī* teachings regarding the various dimensions of society—then they must perform *taqiyyah*. This is so that they protect themselves, and so that their lives and possessions are not lost without achieving any positive effect. For example, the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) have given strict orders to the believers that they must not put themselves in danger by openly expressing their love towards the Imams. This is so that the life and possessions of these believers may be protected.

Mu'allā bin Khunays was one of the foremost lovers of Imam

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 48, p. 136, no. 10.

al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him). The Imam had repeatedly commanded him to do *taqiyyah*, and he himself has narrated the famous tradition regarding *taqiyyah*.[i] The Imam used to warn him that he feared he would put himself in danger. But despite all this, he did not observe *taqiyyah* and was eventually martyred for this reason. After his martyrdom, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ الْمُعَلَّى قَدْ كُنْتُ أَتَوَقَّعُ ذَلِكَ لِأَنَّهُ أَذَاعَ سِرَّنَا

> May God have mercy upon Mu'allā, I was anticipating his martyrdom because he disclosed our secret.[ii]

In the situation of *taqiyyah*, it is necessary that one outwardly pretend that he accepts the ruler, but inwardly he must never accept the rule of oppression. Thus, it is possible that to save one's life they outwardly disassociate themselves from the *awliyā'* of God, and this is permissible. However, it is not permissible to disassociate from them in one's heart. The relationship of the heart with God and His *awliyā'* must be protected.[iii] In such situations, to the extent possible one ought to show that he is happy with that oppressive ruler. However,

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i. Apparently, a reference to the following narration from the sixth Imam (peace be upon him), taken from *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 16, p. 210. (Ed.)

يَا مُعَلَّى اكْتُمْ أَمْرَنَا وَ لَا تُذِعْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ كَتَمَ أَمْرَنَا وَ لَا يُذِيعُهُ أَعَزَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ جَعَلَهُ نُوراً بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ يَقُودُهُ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ- يَا مُعَلَّى إِنَّ التَّقِيَّةَ دِينِي وَ دِينُ آبَائِي- وَ لَا دِينَ لِمَنْ لَا تَقِيَّةَ لَهُ يَا مُعَلَّى إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُعْبَدَ فِي السِّرِّ كَمَا يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُعْبَدَ فِي الْعَلَانِيَةِ وَ الْمُذِيعُ لِأَمْرِنَا كَالْجَاحِدِ لَهُ.

O Mu'allā! Conceal our affair and do not allow it to leak out, for verily whosoever conceals our affair and does not spread it, Allah will honour him in this world and place for him a light between his eyes that drives him to Paradise. O Mu'allā! Verily *taqiyyah* is my religion and the religion of my fathers, and there is no religion for the one who has no *taqiyyah*. O Mu'allā! Verily Allah loves that He be worshipped in secret just as how He loves that he be worshipped in public, and the one who spreads our affair is like the one who belies it.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 2, p. 74, no. 42.

iii. bid., vol. 39, p. 317, no. 15 and 16.

this is only permissible so long as it does not harm his religion, that is so long as he does not become a partner to the ruler's tyranny. If the situation of *taqiyyah* reaches a point that one is compelled to shed the blood of the people of truth and the oppressed, the Imam says that this is no longer the place for *taqiyyah*. In this situation a person must be a shield and protect the believers from calamity. Therefore, the Imams have told us to do *taqiyyah* only when cooperating with the oppressor does not result in one taking part in the annihilation of other believers.

A PERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN AN ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT

When an Islamic government is established and the ruler is a believer who administers his government in all its various dimensions

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عَنْ عَلِيٍّ ع قَالَ: إِنَّكُمْ سَتُعْرَضُونَ عَلَى الْبَرَاءَةِ مِنِّي فَلَا تَتَبَرَّءُوا مِنِّي فَإِنِّي عَلَى دِينِ مُحَمَّدٍ.

It is narrated from 'Alī (peace be upon him) that he said, "Verily you will be subjected to [a situation wherein you must] disassociate from me, but do not disassociate from me for indeed I am on the religion of Muḥammad."

الإرشاد مِنْ مُعْجِزَاتِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ مَا اسْتَفَاضَ عَنْهُ مِنْ قَوْلِهِ إِنَّكُمْ سَتُعْرَضُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي عَلَى سَبِّي فَسُبُّونِي فَإِنْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْبَرَاءَةُ مِنِّي فَلَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنِّي فَإِنِّي وُلِدْتُ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ فَمَنْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ الْبَرَاءَةُ فَلْيَمْدُدْ عُنُقَهُ فَمَنْ تَبَرَّأَ مِنِّي فَلَا دُنْيَا لَهُ وَ لَا آخِرَةَ وَ

كَانَ الْأَمْرُ فِي ذَلِكَ كَمَا قَالَ ع

In the book *al-Irshād* it is mentioned amongst the miracles of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (may the blessings of Allah be upon him) is that he said, "Verily after my demise you will be subjected to [a situation wherein you must] curse me, so curse me. But if you must disassociate from me, then do not disassociate from me for indeed I was born as a Muslim. So, if you must disassociate [from me], then instead extend your neck [and be executed]. For indeed, whosoever disassociates from me will not attain this world nor the hereafter." [The author Shaykh al-Mufid then goes on to say:] "And the reality was as he (peace be upon him) said."

based on Islamic laws, then undoubtedly the citizens have certain specific responsibilities.

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) has mentioned these responsibilities on several occasions. Believers must be absolutely obedient with respect to a government that is one hundred percent Islamic and whose ruler is infallible. The Imam (peace be upon him) says to his *ummah* (nation) that:

إِنَّ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ حَقّاً وَ لَكُمْ عَلَيَّ حَقٌّ ... أَمَّا حَقِّي عَلَيْكُمْ فَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْبَيْعَةِ وَ النَّصِيحَةُ فِي الْمَشْهَدِ وَ الْمَغِيبِ وَ الْإِجَابَةُ حِينَ أَدْعُوكُمْ وَ الطَّاعَةُ حِينَ آمُرُكُم

> Verily, I have a right upon you, and you have a right upon me ... My right upon you is that you be loyal to your allegiance to me, you be my well-wishers and benevolent advisers in my presence as well as in my absence, you answer the call when I call you, and you obey when I command you.[i]

It is an indisputable fact that when believers have comprehended the essential importance given to having a religious government and religious rulers in Islam, then they must pursue the establishment of such a government. They must seek out such Islamic rulers, whose attributes have been mentioned by Allah. Allah has sent down a comprehensive religion that guarantees complete felicity for the human, and it is obvious that one necessary dimension of the human's felicity pertains to government. The teachings are clear from God's side, and the onus is now on the believers. After accepting these fundamental matters, they must strive for the establishment of an Islamic government. Establishing the rulership of God's religion has certain requirements which were mentioned in the above tradition of Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him). If one does not strive in this regard and due to this carelessness, a secular government is imposed

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 34.

on the believers, then they shall be afflicted with the unfortunate consequences mentioned by Allah.

If believers do not seek out the true Islamic rulers, then it is not the case that their authority and right to rule vanishes. Rather, the correct opinion is that the legitimacy of the prophets' and the Imams' (peace be upon them) rule is from Allah. The people only prepare the ground for its implementation and its realization, not that they confer this right to rule. Therefore, when a ruler has been appointed by Allah, people must submit to him and obey all his commands and prohibitions, because his obedience is the obedience of Allah.

مَّن يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly obeys Allah. (4:80)

Similarly, if a ruler has been appointed—be it in a specific manner or in a general manner—by one of the Infallibles, then his obedience is also obligatory according to the intellect as well as the *shari'ah*. This is the case even if it later comes to light that the command of this leader was incorrect. Those who obeyed him acted as per their responsibility and God accepts that from them.

A RULER'S RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE PEOPLE AS PER THE INTELLECT

An important responsibility of someone who takes on the task of governing a society, is that he must adequately perform the basic responsibilities of a government. This responsibility is other than the religious responsibilities he has. His religious responsibilities—which themselves are human and intellectual responsibilities—are that he employs his intellect and pursues that goal for which Allah created him. But apart from that, even if he is unreligious, he must adequately manage and govern the worldly affairs of his subjects. This is because he has taken on the responsibility of governing them. Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) says:

إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ دِينٌ وَ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَخَافُونَ الْمَعَادَ فَكُونُوا أَحْرَاراً فِي دُنْيَاكُم

If you have no religion and if you do not fear the resurrection, then at least be free in your worldly affairs. [i]

The life of all human beings, even if they are unreligious, has certain requirements that must be fulfilled to manage one's life. If someone deprives others of these primary necessities of life, then they will be held accountable for this, not only according to the dictates of religion but also as per the intellect and common sense.

THE NECESSITY OF DESIRING GOOD AND BEING SYMPATHETIC TOWARDS A NON-MUSLIM RULER

As per the advice of the *awliyā'* of religion, when a non-Muslim ruler strives to help his subjects reach the necessities of life, he must be assisted in this regard and not opposed. For example, ways in which he can rectify the people's affairs can be presented to him. Moreover, when necessary, believers should take action to assist and strengthen such a ruler so long as this is not considered an act of oppression or strengthening an oppressive rule. Such was the practice of the Imams (peace be upon them), they took steps to rectify the affairs of their societies even though they did not accept the validity of the rulers. Their desire was that the laws of the *sharī'ah* be implemented even if just a small percentage of the government was religious. At times in history, Islamic scholars also took such actions. Imam Khumaynī (may Allah be pleased with him) also pursued the same goal in his revolution against the unjust government of the Shah. Imam Khumaynī sought to improve the government and make it—even just a bit—religious. Therefore, it is very important to have an Islamic government and for the ruler to be an Islamic personality.

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i. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-luhūf*, p. 120; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 51.

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THE RIGHT OF THE TEACHER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَالتَّعْظِيمُ لَهُ وَ التَّوْقِيرُ لِمَجْلِسِهِ وَ حُسْنُ الِاسْتِمَاعِ إِلَيْهِ وَ الْإِقْبَالُ عَلَيْهِ وَ الْمَعُونَةُ لَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ فِيمَا لَا غِنَى بِكَ عَنْهُ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ بِأَنْ تُفَرِّغَ لَهُ عَقْلَكَ وَ تُحَضِّرَهُ فَهْمَكَ وَ تُزَكِّيَ لَهُ قَلْبَكَ وَ تُجَلِّيَ لَهُ بَصَرَكَ بِتَرْكِ اللَّذَّاتِ وَ نَقْصِ الشَّهَوَاتِ وَ أَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ فِيمَا أَلْقَى إِلَيْكَ رَسُولُهُ إِلَى مَنْ لَقِيَكَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَهْلِ فَلَزِمَكَ حُسْنُ التَّأْدِيَةِ عَنْهُ إِلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا تَخُنْهُ فِي تَأْدِيَةِ رِسَالَتِهِ وَ الْقِيَامِ بِهَا عَنْهُ إِذَا تَقَلَّدْتَهَا وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the one who manages your affairs through knowledge [your teacher] is that you revere him, you respect his presence, listen to him well, turn your face to him, and assist him in teaching you that knowledge for which you are in need. [You must assist him] by freeing your mind, preparing yourself to understand, purifying your heart and clarifying your vision through abstaining from worldly pleasures and decreasing your desires. Know that with respect to that which he teaches you, you are his messenger to the ignorant people who meet you. Thus,

it is necessary that you convey [this knowledge] to them well. When you have taken up the responsibility to convey his message, then do not betray him in this regard. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

STATION OF KNOWLEDGE

In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) gives priority and preference to the spiritual relationship of a person with their teacher, over other relationships. In doing so, he puts a heavy responsibility on a person with respect to his teacher. Knowledge, acquiring it, and making it reach others all hold a lofty position, so much so that Allah introduces Himself as the first teacher:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 260
Some of the points mentioned by the author (may Allah preserve him) in this section have been taken from the version of *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* that is narrated in the book *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*. This narration differs from the version quoted in the text, which has been taken from the book *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*. For the benefit of the readers, we will now quote the other version of this section on the teacher's right. Taken from al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 620. (Ed.)

وَ حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ التَّعْظِيمُ لَهُ وَ التَّوْقِيرُ لِمَجْلِسِهِ وَ حُسْنُ الِاسْتِمَاعِ إِلَيْهِ وَ الْإِقْبَالُ عَلَيْهِ وَ أَنْ لَا تَرْفَعَ عَلَيْهِ صَوْتَكَ وَ لَا تُجِيبَ أَحَداً يَسْأَلُهُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى يَكُونَ هُوَ الَّذِي يُجِيبُ وَ لَا تُحَدِّثَ فِي مَجْلِسِهِ أَحَداً وَ لَا تَغْتَابَ عِنْدَهُ أَحَداً وَ أَنْ تَدْفَعَ عَنْهُ إِذَا ذُكِرَ عِنْدَكَ بِسُوءٍ وَ أَنْ تَسْتُرَ عُيُوبَهُ وَ تُظْهِرَ مَنَاقِبَهُ وَ لَا تُجَالِسَ لَهُ عَدُوّاً وَ لَا تُعَادِيَ لَهُ وَلِيّاً فَإِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ شَهِدَتْ لَكَ مَلَائِكَةُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ بِأَنَّكَ قَصَدْتَهُ وَ تَعَلَّمْتَ عِلْمَهُ لِلَّهِ جَلَّ وَ عَزَّ اسْمُهُ لَا لِلنَّاسِ

The right of the one who trains you through knowledge is magnifying him, respecting his sessions, listening well to him, and attending to him with devotion. You should not raise your voice towards him. You should never answer anyone who asks him about something, in order that he may be the one who answers. You should not speak to anyone in his session nor speak ill of anyone with him. If anyone ever speaks ill of him in your presence, you should defend him. You should conceal his faults and make manifest his virtues. You should not sit with him in enmity or show hostility towards him in friendship. If you do all of this, God's angels will give witness for you that you went straight to him and learned his knowledge for God's sake, not for the sake of the people.

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Read, and your Lord is the most generous, Who taught by the pen, taught a person what he did not know. (96:3-5)

In the view of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, knowledge is a lofty and immaterial reality. If the object of knowledge is also immaterial, then the station of such knowledge will be even more eminent. Examples of such immaterial knowledge include knowledge about Allah, the intermediaries of Divine grace, the resurrection of human beings, those things which connect the human to the unseen realm and its understanding, as well as knowledge about the responsibilities of servitude and the ways of reaching Allah. Moreover, even if other kinds of knowledge are used to help a person in attaining such immaterial knowledge, then they also acquire the same importance to their own extent. It is for this reason that the Noble Qur'ān mentions knowledge about other creatures as being knowledge of Allah's signs. To whatever extent we use the material sciences and the laws of this world to attain such a Divine outlook, we would have perceived the realities of this world.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A STUDENT TOWARDS THEIR TEACHER

The Imams (peace be upon them) have mentioned the etiquettes and responsibilities of students towards their teachers so that by acting in accordance with these teachings, a student can correctly benefit from the seeking of knowledge.

1. Respecting and Revering the Teacher

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if one wants to fulfil the right of his teacher he must respect and venerate him, for one's teacher is the source of their training and nurture in terms of knowledge. This intellectual dimension is more noble and has a higher station compared to the material aspect of a person's existence. A student must not deem the gathering of his teacher to be

like other gatherings. He must go to his teacher with the sincere intention of acquiring knowledge, and he must listen well to what the teacher says because understanding is a consequence of listening well. A person needs to listen well for a lengthy period of time in order to develop and be nurtured. Continuously studying and struggling with academic issues brings about a deep and nuanced understanding for a person.

Being able to ask good questions itself indicates a degree of knowledge. One must not say everything and anything that comes to their mind. Instead, issues must be analysed and considered, and their suitability with what the teacher is discussing should be checked. This requires that the person be attentive while listening. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said to 'Unwān al-Baṣrī that if he wants to ask questions, it should not be for the purpose of rendering someone unable to answer.[i] One who is truly a seeker of knowledge, is seeking luminosity and the truth. These two matters should be the pivot around which his quest for knowledge rotates. If such an outlook is maintained, then there is no problem in any number of questions, and it was due to this that the Infallibles (peace be upon them) used to allow those who had questions to freely ask.

Among the other *akhlāqī* responsibilities of a student towards their teacher as mentioned by the Infallibles (peace be upon them), is that a student should not raise their voice above his. And if someone asks a question during his class, then the student must listen to what the teacher says. Even when he knows the answer, he should listen to what the teacher has to say and preserve his respect. If the teacher does not know the answer, he should not say the answer in that gathering because doing so will exhibit the teacher's ignorance. Also, he should not speak to anyone during that gathering and should not backbite

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 1, p. 226.

فَاسْأَلِ الْعُلَمَاءَ مَا جَهِلْتَ وَ إِيَّاكَ أَنْ تَسْأَلَهُمْ تَعَنُّتاً وَ تَجْرِبَةً

Ask the scholars what you do not know, and do not ask them to render them powerless or to test them.

anyone else in the presence of his teacher. Of course, backbiting is sinful everywhere, but more so in a gathering of knowledge which is a luminous gathering. Sin transforms this luminosity into darkness.

Also, while in the presence of the teacher, it is necessary that the student should have more of a desire to listen than to speak. He must not interrupt his teacher.[i] Lastly, in a gathering in which the teacher enters, the student should stand up on his teacher's entry.[ii]

2. Being in the Presence of the Teacher

Another *akhlāqī* responsibility is that the teacher and student should sit face-to-face with one another during the class. They should develop a relationship with one another because the aim of such a class is not simply to transfer concepts. Rather, the gathering place of learning is the meeting point of two living souls, and a student also benefits from the behaviour of his teacher. In addition, the student's attention should be towards the teacher. He must not behave as if he is not even present in the class. For example, he should not be engrossed in reading some other book or performing some futile action.

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 2, p. 43, no. 11.

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع إِذَا جَلَسْتَ إِلَى الْعَالِمِ فَكُنْ عَلَى أَنْ تَسْمَعَ أَحْرَصَ مِنْكَ عَلَى أَنْ تَقُولَ وَ تَعَلَّمْ حُسْنَ الِاسْتِمَاعِ كَمَا تَعَلَّمُ حُسْنَ الْقَوْلِ وَ لَا تَقْطَعْ عَلَى حَدِيثِهِ.

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said, "When you sit before a scholar than you should desire to listen more than to speak. Learn to listen well just as how you learn to speak well. And do not interrupt his speech."

ii. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 43, no. 10.

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ مَجْلِسِهِ تَعْظِيماً لِرَجُلٍ قَالَ مَكْرُوهٌ إِلَّا لِرَجُلٍ فِي الدِّينِ

The narrator says, "I said to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), 'Whosoever stands up in respect for another person.' He replied, 'This is detested except for a person of religion'"

3. Defending the Teacher

One of the rights of brothers in faith on one another is that if the wrongdoing of a faithful brother is mentioned in front of someone, he ought to support him and defend him against those wrongdoings. Although this is the case with respect to all believers, some individuals have a distinction over others. There are special relationships aside from the general relationship of faith that entail that this ruling be observed even more so and with more firmness. One such individual is the teacher. A person owes an aspect of his being and life to his teacher. Therefore, when confronted with someone who is exposing the defects and wrongdoings of his teacher, a believer must defend his teacher and acquit him of those faults. Similarly, the student has a responsibility that when he witnesses a defect in his teacher, he ought to hide it and if necessary, he can appropriately remind his teacher so that he rids himself of the defect.

4. Mentioning his Merits

Not only should one hide the defects of their teacher, but it is also necessary to state and recount his merits and virtues. Everyone has positive points in them. In his social interactions, a person should try to pay attention to the positive points of others and not allow his soul to think about and look for their negative traits. That's why having a bad opinion regarding others (*sū' al-ẓann*) is considered as one of the very serious and destructive traits which spoils a person's relationships with others. If one constantly highlights the negative aspects of others inside his soul, then Shayṭān also intensifies this, causing a person's life to become distressed and his relations with others unsettled. For this reason, the Imam says that one of the rights of the teacher on his students is to recount his merits and virtues.

Some people are truly unappreciative and ungrateful. They benefit from someone's knowledge but present it as their own. For example, a person writes a book or speaks about an issue which he has taken from somewhere else, but he does so in a way that makes it seem that

it is from himself! This action is a type of betrayal and deception. As opposed to this, being appreciative and grateful is one of the causes of more *tawfiq*[i] for a person. When a person benefits from someone, if he appreciates it and mentions how he benefitted from that person's works, then doing this will be counted as a recounting of that person's merits. If one does that, then he has fulfilled that person's right and has shown gratefulness to him. However, if he does not act in this manner, then as per a tradition, Allah says to him, "O My servant! You did not thank Me because you did not thank the one who made this blessing reach you."[ii] For this reason, Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) says:

> مَنْ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْمُنْعِمَ مِنَ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَل
>
> One who does not thank the one who gives a blessing from amongst the creatures, has not thanked Allah (the Invincible and Majestic).[iii]

Of course, expressing the virtues and merits of a teacher can be done in different ways: by mentioning his academic views, by mentioning his spiritual perfections and the attributes of his soul, or even by the student exhibiting the teacher's own perfections in his behaviour.

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i. The Arabic root *wafiqa* means to fit or conform. The word *tawfiq* is derived from this root since it pertains to conforming with Allah's command. *Tawfiq* means that Allah arranges the causes for a servant in such a manner that it pulls him towards a virtuous deed, or He does not bring about some of the causes that would help the servant perform an act of disobedience. Taken from Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 10, p. 376. (Ed.)

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 99, no. 30.

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى لِعَبْدٍ مِنْ عَبِيدِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَ شَكَرْتَ فُلَاناً فَيَقُولُ بَلْ شَكَرْتُكَ يَا رَبِّ فَيَقُولُ لَمْ تَشْكُرْنِي إِذْ لَمْ تَشْكُرْهُ

On the Day of Judgment, Allah says to a servant from among His servants, "Did you thank so-and-so?" He says, "Rather, I thanked You, my lord." He says, "You have not thanked Me, since you did not thank him."

iii. al-Ṣadūq, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (peace be upon him), vol. 2, p. 24, no. 2.

5. Not Accompanying His Enemies

A student must not be friends with someone who has enmity against his teacher. This is because when a person develops a relationship of friendship and brotherhood with someone, he must also befriend that person's friends and be an enemy to his enemies. The relationship of teaching and learning is a relationship of a person's servitude towards his teacher. Of course, the teacher may have certain academic views that someone else may reject. In academic discourse such disagreements are normal, and it must be so. Therefore, there is no problem in disproving a teacher's view with reasoning and whilst also observing the appropriate *akhlāq*. If someone refutes the views of one's teacher in an academic context, then this is not an instance of enmity and there is no problem in being companions with such a person.

In continuation, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if you have such a relationship with your teacher, then the Divine angels will bear witness that you have intended Allah and acquired the knowledge of the teacher. This means that such behaviour is indicative of one's sincere intention in the acquisition of knowledge. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ لِلَّهِ، وَ عَمِلَ لِلَّهِ، وَ عَلَّمَ لِلَّهِ، دُعِيَ فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ عَظِيمًا

> One who learns for the sake of Allah, acts for the sake of Allah, and teaches for the sake of Allah, he is remembered in the celestial realm of the heavens (the *malakūt*) as being great [he will have a high station].[i]

6. The Correct Transfer of His Knowledge

Another one of the teacher's rights is that after correctly learning from him, a student correctly transfers this knowledge to others, while bearing in mind the level that these other individuals can

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i. al-Ṭūsī, *Al-amālī*, p. 167.

comprehend. This process requires careful deliberation and contemplation over what was learned. The student must not simply listen, memorize, and then pass on whatever he learns to everyone else. By doing so he could become a negative influence on others, because he conveyed knowledge of his teacher to those who have no ability to benefit from it. If a student takes care of this matter, then he has succeeded in preserving the status of his teacher when transferring his knowledge to others, and by doing so he will reap the desired scholarly and spiritual effects. However, if he does not, then he has betrayed his teacher and shall have to face the negative consequences of this treachery.

17
THE RIGHT OF THE MASTER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْمِلْكِ فَنَحْوٌ مِنْ سَائِسِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ إِلَّا أَنَّ هَذَا يَمْلِكُ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُهُ ذَاكَ تَلْزَمُكَ طَاعَتُهُ فِيمَا دَقَّ وَ جَلَّ مِنْكَ إِلَّا أَنْ تُخْرِجَكَ مِنْ وُجُوبِ حَقِّ اللَّهِ وَ يَحُولَ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ حَقِّهِ وَ حُقُوقِ الْخَلْقِ فَإِذَا قَضَيْتَهُ رَجَعْتَ إِلَى حَقِّهِ فَتَشَاغَلْتَ بِهِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the one who manages your affairs through ownership [your master] is like the right of the one who manages your affairs through power [the ruler]. The difference is that this one [the master] possesses rights that that one does not. Obeying his commands is incumbent upon you—with regards to every small and big command—unless he seeks to remove you from the obligatory right of Allah and seeks to be an obstacle between you and Allah's right [or between you] and the rights of the people. Thus, when you have fulfilled God's rights [in such a situation], then you must return to his [your master's] obedience and be occupied with fulfilling it. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 261.

In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has mentioned the right of the master on his slave in a general manner. In two other sections, he has mentioned the rights of freeing slaves.[i] At that point, we will present a discussion regarding the issue of slavery in Islam and the conditions and virtues of freeing slaves.

i. It appears that the two sections being referred to by the author (may Allah protect him) are section numbers 25 and 26. However, the brief discussion indicated in the next sentence is found under section number 21. (Ed.)

THE RIGHTS OF SUBJECTS AND SUBORDINATES

18

THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS

فَأَمَّا حُقُوقُ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ إِنَّمَا اسْتَرْعَيْتَهُمْ بِفَضْلِ قُوَّتِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ إِنَّمَا أَحَلَّهُمْ مَحَلَّ الرَّعِيَّةِ لَكَ ضَعْفُهُمْ وَ ذُلُّهُمْ فَمَا أَوْلَى مَنْ كَفَاكَهُ ضَعْفُهُ وَ ذُلُّهُ حَتَّى صَيَّرَهُ لَكَ رَعِيَّةً وَ صَيَّرَ حُكْمَكَ عَلَيْهِ نَافِذاً لَا يَمْتَنِعُ مِنْكَ بِعِزَّةٍ وَ لَا قُوَّةٍ وَ لَا يَسْتَنْصِرُ فِيمَا تَعَاظَمَهُ مِنْكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ بِالرَّحْمَةِ وَ الْحِيَاطَةِ وَ الْأَنَاةِ وَ مَا أَوْلَاكَ إِذَا عَرَفْتَ مَا أَعْطَاكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِ هَذِهِ الْعِزَّةِ وَ الْقُوَّةِ الَّتِي قَهَرْتَ بِهَا أَنْ تَكُونَ لِلَّهِ شَاكِراً وَ مَنْ شَكَرَ اللَّهَ أَعْطَاهُ فِيمَا أَنْعَمَ عَلَيْهِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the rights of the citizens under your power and authority is that you know that you have made them your subjects due to your power. They have only become your subjects and subordinates on account of their weakness and humility. Therefore, how appropriate it is that this suffices you [from any evil and cause you to be at ease]! Their weakness and humility made them your subjects and made your authority prevail over them, in such a way that they have no power or ability to resist you. In the face of whatever [difficulties] they consider great that

have come from you, they have no choice but to seek Allah's help and His mercy, and to have patience and perseverance. Therefore, how befitting it is for you when you have recognized the distinction Allah has given you by this power and ability through which you dominated [over your subjects], that you be thankful to Allah! For whoever is thankful to Allah, He increases for him in that blessing which He has granted him. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SOCIAL SYSTEMS

One of the important aspects of a person's existence is the social relationships that he has with others. The *sharī'ah* has placed specific responsibilities on a person's shoulders with regards to the different types of these relationships. A person's relationship of servitude with God can be realized through every one of these human relationships.

Among these different relationships is the relationship of leadership and authority of some individuals over others. Human social systems—from the family system to other systems—are based on

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 261.
Some of the points mentioned by the author (may Allah preserve him) in this section have been taken from the version of *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* that is narrated in the book *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*. This narration differs from the version quoted in the text, which has been taken from the book *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*. For the benefit of the readers, we will now quote the other version of this section on the teacher's right. Taken from al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 620. (Ed.)

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُمْ صَارُوا رَعِيَّتَكَ لِضَعْفِهِمْ وَ قُوَّتِكَ فَيَجِبُ أَنْ تَعْدِلَ فِيهِمْ وَ تَكُونَ لَهُمْ كَالْوَالِدِ الرَّحِيمِ وَ تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَهْلَهُمْ وَ لَا تُعَاجِلَهُمْ بِالْعُقُوبَةِ وَ تَشْكُرَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عَلَى مَا آتَاكَ مِنَ الْقُوَّةِ عَلَيْهِم

And the right of your subjects through authority is that you should know that they have been made subjects through their weakness and your strength. Hence it is incumbent upon you to act with justice towards them and to be like a compassionate father towards them. You should forgive them their ignorance and not hurry them to punishment, and you should thank God for the power over them which He has given to you.

guardianship and authority (*wilāyah*). Essentially, guardianship and authority is one of the positions of Allah Himself that He has implemented among His servants and has in turn designated responsibilities for them with regards to this station. Men are different from one another, and due to their different positions, they have differing aspects of weakness and strength. To establish the social system in the way that He wills, Allah has designated different relationships among different individuals. In addition to the legal responsibilities that pertain to these relationships, He has also designated *akhlāqī* responsibilities for the correct and orderly regulation of these relationships.

THE IMPORTANCE GIVEN TO LEADERSHIP IN ISLAM

In every system, be it small or large, the Divine Legislator has sought to prevent anarchy and chaos. He has given the responsibility of managing to those who possess a certain level of intellect, knowledge, and awareness so that they can understand where the best interests lie. However, a person cannot comprehend all that is in his best interest and that's why the Divine Legislator has also clarified some of those interests for us. So long as these attributes are present in a leader, the right of leadership and governance will remain with him. However, if he does not have enough understanding or the academic ability for it, then the scope of his authority is automatically reduced and can reach a level that he himself will be in need of a leader.

The first and smallest system in which a person grows and resides under its guardianship, is the system of the family. In this system, God has given power and the right of leadership to the father because he has been afforded a higher level of strength, intellect and management ability.[i] When Islam has appointed a leader for a unit as small as a family and when Allah has created the human in such a way that he has the ability to take up the leadership of other individuals,

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i. Qur'ān 4:34.

then undoubtedly this is also the case in the social system. Clearly, only those individuals whose faculties of thought and willpower are strong enough to manage and give order to society, can become leaders of society. Much attention has been paid to this issue in the verses of the Qur'ān and the traditions.

THE NECESSITY OF OBEYING THE LEADER

The appointment of a leader is one of the most important issues with regards to managing an Islamic system, and thus it demands suitable laws. The necessary outcome of someone becoming a leader over a matter is that others obey him. In this regard, the primary criteria based on which he should be followed on a matter, is that the matter at hand or the person being obeyed be with the truth (*ḥaqq*). As has been said in the Noble Qur'ān:

... وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ

... and the faithful follow the truth from their Lord. (47:3)

The truth must be obeyed. Unto this end, we have been ordered to obey those who are on the side of the truth, the foremost among whom are the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and his truthful successors.[i] Allah the Provider of abundance and the Sublime, is Himself the absolute truth, and His commandments have also been revealed according to the truth.[ii] Thus, obeying Him is the truth and similarly, following those through whom the truth has been sent down for people, is also obedience of the truth.

If the reciprocal responsibilities that the leader and his citizens have been entrusted with—including both the binding as well as *akhlāqī* responsibilities—are correctly implemented, then this results in a better manifestation of a person's relationship of servitude with Allah.

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i. Qur'ān 4:59.

ii. Qur'ān 39:41.

SOCIAL COMMANDMENTS, A DIMENSION OF ALLAH'S SERVITUDE

The reason for emphasizing this point is to prevent this notion from being formed that Allah's servitude is separate from the human social system. The human social system has been created by Allah and He has issued the most precise social commandments and has desired that He be worshipped through them. In addition, to assist a person in treading this path He introduced His sincere servants as role-models; individuals who fulfilled the Lord's right of servitude in the most expansive social responsibilities as well as in the most private individual actions.[i]

Therefore, religious commandments are not a set of dry and theoretical matters. Rather, they are laws that can be and indeed must be implemented, from the simplest of Islamic systems—that is the family unit—up to the high-level institutions that manage society. In this way, every organization in society has its own responsibilities. To their own extent, everybody has the responsibility of acting on the commandments of Allah's servitude.

A PERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS HIS SUBORDINATES

1. Justice Coupled with Compassion

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that one must implement justice with respect to their subordinates by being like an affectionate father to them. We have been enjoined to completely comply with the responsibilities pertaining to our social relationships, and to also take care of the emotional aspects of these relationships. It should not be the case that people only consider one dimension of a person and remain negligent towards the other dimensions. For example, when the Noble Qur'ān says, "men are the managers of women,"[ii]

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i. Qur'ān 5:55.

ii. Qur'ān 4:34.

this does not mean a dictatorship. It should not be that whenever a man enters his house, he behaves like a commander. On the contrary, regardless of who he may be, when a man enters his house, he must realize what position he has in his family. Allah has specified this position in this noble verse:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً

> And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. (30:21)

Allah has made love and mercy preside in the relationship between husband and wife. This implies that the husband's leadership must be coupled with love and mercy, and the details of a family's obligations, or their emotional and spiritual affairs should be determined while bearing that in mind. Not abiding by these matters creates problems within the family and in society.

Similarly, in all social systems—ranging from the family system up to the governance of society—the relationship between the leader and the individuals must be based on love and mercy. This is the view of Islam, and this is how the Creator of the world—who is the ultimate ruler—Himself is. He describes Himself as being *raḥmān* and *raḥīm*, and it is recommended that a person commence any task by first saying, "*bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm.*" This is recommended regardless of whether the task be one that is favourable and attractive, or whether it is disliked and undesirable. Hence, even though the system of creation is based on the management and authority of God, it is a type of management that revolves around the axis of mercy and compassion.

One who has a relationship of rulership with others, has certain responsibilities on his shoulders. In fact, these responsibilities are the same responsibilities of servitude that Allah has assigned to him in all spheres of life, be they individual, social, or political. As said

by Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), a ruler must realize that the relationship that has been established between him and those he governs is a grace and favour of Allah. It is through this relationship that Allah wills to extend His grace to His servants.

The rulership of Allah over His servants is not without intermediaries, rather He has designated means and tools for the actualization of His rulership. Between these intermediaries and Allah's servants He designated a relationship of being in need and fulfilling one another's needs. A leader must interact with his subordinates while keeping this perspective in mind, that a person's innate nature manifests the attributes of God's perfection.

In addition to mentioning the practical responsibilities or the *akhlāqī* relationships between people, the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) also give a person a deep insight in their words. The foundation and bedrock of their nurturing commandments are these very *tawhīdī* (monotheistic) points. That's why the Imam says a leader must establish justice and establishing justice is like the relationship of an affectionate father with his children. This is a metaphor for a general law that such relationships between people should not simply be the relationship of ruler and subject. Rather, the foundation of the relationship should be based on the implementation of justice, coupled with benevolence and compassion.

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) has some beautiful expressions in his luminous letter to Mālik al-Ashtar, which was issued to clarify various rulings regarding the governance of Muslims. For example, he says:

أَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّة

Make your heart feel mercy for your subjects.[i]

There is a difference between love and mercy. Love is a relationship in which one has a pull and an inner inclination. However, mercy is when one has a feeling of sympathy which causes him to strive to

i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, letter no. 53.

eliminate other person's deficiencies.

2. Forgiveness and Overlooking of Mistakes

As per Imam al-Sajjād's (peace be upon him) saying, compassionate behaviour with one's subordinates entails that if any mistake is made by them out of ignorance, then the leader should not make a big deal about it. Rather, he should overlook it and not be quick to punish them. One of the necessities of justice is to pay attention to these qualities. Even though an individual who violates those rights required of him should be punished, nonetheless affection must preside over our relationship with that violator. This means that our goal from this relationship should be to guide people and attract them such that they act in accordance with Islamic regulations out of their own accord.

Allah has specified responsibilities for His servants and has ordained consequences for fulfilling or disobeying these responsibilities. Despite this, it is not the case that His relationship with His servants is solely based on regulations and absolute justice. Rather, alongside justice His grace and mercy also encompass the servants. In this regard, Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said to Mālik al-Ashtar:

أَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ وَ الْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ وَ اللُّطْفَ بِهِمْ وَ لَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبُعاً ضَارِياً تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ وَ إِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ يَفْرُط مِنْهُمُ الزَّلَلُ وَ تَعْرِضُ لَهُمُ الْعِلَلُ وَ يُؤْتَى عَلَى أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي الْعَمْدِ وَ الْخَطَإِ فَأَعْطِهِمْ مِنْ عَفْوِكَ وَ صَفْحِكَ مِثْلِ الَّذِي تُحِبُّ وَ تَرْضَى أَنْ يُعْطِيَكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ عَفْوِهِ وَ صَفْحِه

Make your heart feel mercy for your subjects, love them and be kind and gentle with them. Do not be with them like a fierce beast who is waiting for an opportunity to eat them. For verily they are of two types, either they are your

> brothers in faith or they are your equals in creation. They may stumble inadvertently, problems may arise for them, and they make mistakes, both intentionally and unintentionally. So, grant them your forgiveness and pardon to that extent to which you would be pleased and love that God forgive and pardon you.[i]

This statement of the Imam, in reality, deals with anthropology or the study of human beings. It emphasizes this point that in his relationships with others—such as his spouse, child, and students—a person must bear in mind that all of them are prone to making mistakes. Such mistakes may also happen in a relationship between friends. It should not be that someone becomes friends with another and then expects that his friend will never make a mistake. And if he does make a mistake at some point, then he severs his friendship with him. On the contrary, his perspective should be that he thinks, "I too am like him, it's possible that the same situation could transpire for me."

3. Being Thankful for the Blessing of Responsibility

In various aspects of the life of this world and in its social relationships, someone is a boss, and another is his subordinate. One person is the ruler, and another is his subject. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says, addressing the one with the higher position, that they must be grateful to Allah that He has granted them such a responsibility. With this perspective, one understands that Allah has considered him worthy, such that perfections reach others through him. This outlook is seen in the conduct of the prophets.

Prophet Sulaymān (peace be upon him) was a prophet whose rulership is incomparable and has no equal. He had authority over the jinn, human beings, animals, and even over inanimate beings. Although all the prophets had such rulership, the manifestation of it was specific to Prophet Sulaymān. Everyone would watch as

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i. al-Radī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, letter no. 53.

animals came before him with their disputes, and he would judge between them. Until the time of noon, he would remain on the seat of judgment. After Allah gave him this rulership, he said to Allah:

... أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ

Inspire me to give thanks for Your blessing with which You have blessed me.[i]

Because one of the means of being grateful is to guide others towards the true religion, Prophet Sulaymān (peace be upon him) summoned the Queen of Sabā. His goal was that the religion of God be realized throughout her kingdom, and that the people be guided towards Him.[ii]

In conclusion, when we look at the social relationships from the perspective of the Imams (peace be upon them), we understand that these relationships are intended to allow everyone to achieve their human and primary rights. This must be coupled with benevolence and compassion. If anyone makes errors, he should be dealt with forgiveness and mercy. In this way that the grounds are prepared—to the highest extent possible—for justice to be implemented and for a person's relationship with God to be realized.

Lastly, being grateful for attaining rulership means that a ruler should first be aware of the responsibilities of rulership. This will allow him to implement justice in the various dimensions of his rule and fulfil the people's rights. Secondly, he must strive to fulfil those responsibilities correctly by undergoing an internal struggle. It is by struggling against his own carnal desires and that of others that he can realize his goal. In this manner, he must always seek to protect his own and the people's best interests.

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i. Qur'ān 16:18-19.

ii. Qur'ān 16:40 and 44.

19
THE RIGHT OF THE STUDENT

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ جَعَلَكَ لَهُمْ فِيمَا آتَاكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَ وَلَّاكَ مِنْ خِزَانَةِ الْحِكْمَةِ فَإِنْ أَحْسَنْتَ فِيمَا وَلَّاكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَ قُمْتَ بِهِ لَهُمْ مَقَامَ الْخَازِنِ الشَّفِيقِ النَّاصِحِ لِمَوْلَاهُ فِي عَبِيدِهِ الصَّابِرِ الْمُحْتَسِبِ الَّذِي إِذَا رَأَى ذَا حَاجَةٍ أَخْرَجَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ الَّتِي فِي يَدَيْهِ كُنْتَ رَاشِداً وَ كُنْتَ لِذَلِكَ آمِلًا مُعْتَقِداً وَ إِلَّا كُنْتَ لَهُ خَائِناً وَ لِخَلْقِهِ ظَالِماً وَ لِسَلَبِهِ وَ عِزِّهِ مُتَعَرِّضاً

And the right of your subordinates in terms of knowledge [your students] is that you know that Allah has made you [a guardian and administrator] for them with respect to the knowledge He has granted you and the treasure of wisdom that He has entrusted you with. Thus, if you carry out this responsibility given to you by Allah properly—if you be for them like a compassionate treasurer, one who wishes the best for his master with respect to His slaves, one who is patient and anticipates God's reward, one who when he sees someone needy, gives him from that wealth which is under his authority—then you are rightly guided,

hopeful, and faithful. Otherwise, you are a traitor to Him and an oppressor of His creation, and you have exposed yourself to Allah's taking away [from you this blessing] and [to the retribution of] His might.[i]

THE NECESSITY OF A TEACHER PAYING ATTENTION TO THE TRUE GIVER OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is one those realities that are beyond the material realm. This is particularly the case with religious knowledge which first appeared in this world in a special manner, revealed by Allah onto the hearts of the prophets, the Imams and the *awliyā'* of Allah. Thereafter it was articulated by them, in the form of explaining the revelation to us. When someone learns this knowledge and seeks to teach it to others, he ought to possess appropriate internal states

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 261.
Some of the points mentioned by the author (may Allah preserve him) in this section have been taken from the version of *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* that is narrated in the book *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*. This narration differs from the version quoted in the text, which has been taken from the book *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*. For the benefit of the readers, we will now quote the other version of this section on the teacher's right. Taken from al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 621. (Ed.)

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِنَّمَا جَعَلَكَ قَيِّماً لَهُمْ فِيمَا آتَاكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَ فَتَحَ لَكَ مِنْ خَزَائِنِهِ فَإِنْ أَحْسَنْتَ فِي تَعْلِيمِ النَّاسِ وَ لَمْ تَخْرَقْ بِهِمْ وَ لَمْ تَضْجَرْ عَلَيْهِمْ زَادَكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَ إِنْ أَنْتَ مَنَعْتَ النَّاسَ عِلْمَكَ أَوْ خَرِقْتَ بِهِمْ عِنْدَ طَلَبِهِمُ الْعِلْمَ مِنْكَ كَانَ حَقّاً عَلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ أَنْ يَسْلُبَكَ الْعِلْمَ وَ بَهَاءَهُ وَ يُسْقِطَ مِنَ الْقُلُوبِ مَحَلَّكَ

The right of your subjects through knowledge is that you should know that God made you a caretaker over them only through the knowledge He has given you and His storehouses which He has opened up to you. If you do well in teaching the people, not treating them roughly or annoying them, then God will increase His bounty towards you. But if you withhold your knowledge from people or treat them roughly when they seek knowledge from you, then it will be God's right to deprive you of knowledge and its splendour and to make you fall from your place in people's hearts.

such that this act of teaching others does not become a veil and an obstacle for him to attain perfections. A person is never independent in acquiring knowledge. The Noble Qur'ān says:

وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ

and He has taught you what you did not know. (4:113)

As per the teachings of the Qur'ān, the real giver of knowledge is Allah, the reality above all perfections. Indeed, every perfection emanates from Him. However, knowledge has a characteristic that makes its attribution to Allah even stronger than other perfections: it is immaterial. That is why it has a closer connection with unseen realities. To acquire knowledge, a person only prepares certain preliminaries. A teacher and student only prepare their mind and make the necessary preliminaries available, but attaining the desired result in a person's soul is an act of Allah. And until this result is attained, a person has not acquired knowledge. Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him) says:

فَإِذَا أَرَادَ اسْتِنَارَةَ مَا فِيهَا نَضَحَهَا بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَ زَرَعَهَا بِالْعِلْمِ وَ زَارِعُهَا وَ الْقَيِّمُ عَلَيْهَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِين

When Allah wants it [a believer's heart] to become luminous, He waters it with wisdom and plants knowledge in it. The developer and guardian of this [knowledge in a person's soul] is the Lord of the worlds. [i]

Allah has created the human such that he seeks the truth, is curious, and asks questions. If one correctly presents a question regarding reality, then its answer is also given by Allah. [ii] In the subject of Islamic laws and responsibilities, and in every other field of knowledge in its own appropriate way, there exists realities. Attaining these realities is not possible except if it is bestowed by Allah. Therefore,

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 421, no. 3.

ii. Qur'ān 14:34.

one who has assumed the role of teaching is someone whom Allah has made a treasurer of His knowledge and if he comprehends something, he should not think that he himself has acquired that knowledge such that a sense of being higher and superior to his students arises within his existence. Rather, as per the saying of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), a teacher must recognize that he is just an intermediary.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING HUMBLE WHILE TEACHING

Sometimes Allah opens the gates of knowledge for a person, and he cannot imagine that others—such as his own student—can attain such knowledge and comprehension. Despite this, if a person realizes that the truth lies with someone else, then humility demands that he accepts this and announces it to others as well. When a person understands something, he must struggle in this regard and inculcate to himself that these realities already existed. He was simply made to understand it, not that he created anything! This is the reality, for knowledge means to attain and reach something. Just as how, to reach a stream you must dig at the earth until the water gushes forth. The water is already there, it is you who must locate its flow so that this water gushes out. A person's knowledge will only truly flourish when he constantly comprehends the relationship of knowledge with Allah. If this relationship is comprehended, then a person attains higher realities.

The foremost exemplar of teaching in the Islamic system is Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him). The realities that emanated from him have multiple dimensions and he nurtured students in each of these dimensions. His behaviour with his students is an example for us to follow. A Syrian man once came to him to debate with him regarding the issue of Imāmah. The Imam sent his students to debate with him. At this time, they saw that Imam was waiting for someone. It became clear that he was waiting for Hishām. Hishām ibn Ḥakam was a prominent and eminent personality who had been trained well by the Imam in discussions of theology (*kalām*).

In the end, Hishām ibn Ḥakam convinced the Syrian man and he became a Shīʿah. Regarding the level of his knowledge, the Imam said to Hishām:

يَا هِشَامُ لَا تَكَادُ تَقَعُ تَلْوِي رِجْلَيْكَ إِذَا هَمَمْتَ بِالْأَرْضِ طِرْتَ مِثْلُكَ فَلْيُكَلِّمِ النَّاسَ

O Hishām! The moment you are going to alight, you bend up your legs [like a bird who is landing]. Just as you are going to hit the ground, you fly up.[i] Those like you should discuss with the people.

But the fundamental point is this that the Imam said the following to him:

فَاتَّقِ الزَّلَّةَ وَ الشَّفَاعَةُ مِنْ وَرَائِهَا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّه

Be careful that you do not stumble [do not become haughty due to such encounters and such victories in debates], and thereafter shall be the intercession, if Allah wills.[ii]

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS TOWARDS STUDENTS

1. Spreading Knowledge

Due to the importance of knowledge, the *awliyā'* of religion have placed the responsibility of conveying and preserving knowledge on those who carry it. Allah revealed to Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him):

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i. In these beautiful words, the Imam (peace be upon him) has used a metaphor of a bird to illustrate how Hishām always had a response ready and would never be defeated in debate. (Ed.)

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 171, no. 4.

تَعَلَّمِ الْخَيْرَ وَ عَلِّمْهُ النَّاسَ فَإِنِّي مُنَوِّرٌ لِمُعَلِّمِي الْخَيْرِ وَ مُتَعَلِّمِيهِ قُبُورَهُمْ حَتَّى لَا يَسْتَوْحِشُوا بِمَكَانِهِم

> Learn goodness and teach it to people. For verily, I shall illuminate the graves of those who teach goodness and those who learn it until they do not fear their abode [their grave].[i]

Many virtues have been mentioned for teachers and students. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّ مُعَلِّمَ الْخَيْرِ لَتَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُ دَوَابُّ الْأَرْضِ وَ حِيتَانُ الْبَحْرِ وَ كُلُّ صَغِيرَةٍ وَ كَبِيرَةٍ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَ سَمَائِه

> Verily, the creatures in the land, the fishes in the sea, and every small and big [being] in the earth and the skies, seeks forgiveness for the teacher of goodness.[ii]

All created beings have a special type of awareness and feeling with respect to Allah and those who tread the path of Allah. Even though we do not comprehend this awareness of theirs, they praise Allah, glorify Him, and even prostrate before Him.[iii] They develop a relationship with those who tread the path of their innate monotheistic nature *(fiṭrat-i tawḥīdī)* of a person and seek forgiveness for such individuals.

2. Employing Good Methods

When a person understands that the knowledge he possesses is a trust of Allah, he must strive to make this knowledge reach others by employing good methods. Just as how the *awliyā'* and Imams (peace be upon them) did so. Whomever they would meet, they would make aware of the unseen realm, the Origin, the resurrection, and the path

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i. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 2, p. 212.

ii. al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, vol. 1, p. 4, no. 5.

iii. Qur'ān 24:41.

to reach that Origin of the unseen. Thus, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that teachers are the custodians of knowledge who must convey it to others.

When the policy of a teacher is to convey realities to others, he first tries to convey these realities through an appropriate method. Secondly, he humbles himself before anyone who explained those realities. If a situation arises whereby his student is more successful than him in understanding and articulating these realities, he will not abstain from learning them from his student. This situation is an example of employing good methods when teaching.

The late Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī travelled to be in the presence of Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī Rashtī, to acquire knowledge from him. At that time, Sayyid Shaftī held the position of religious leadership in Isfahan. In his class, Sayyid Shaftī once presented a problem with regards to a specific jurisprudential issue and then waited for his students to answer it. This was when Shaykh Anṣārī, an extraordinary genius, had recently come to Isfahan after earlier travelling to other cities in the quest of knowledge. Without introducing himself, Shaykh Anṣārī wrote out the answer and gave it to one of the other students and said to him, "When I leave, you present the answer of this problem." However, when he presented the answer, the teacher said, "This answer is not from you. It is either from the Imam of the time (may Allah hasten his reappearance) or from Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī!" The student said, "O teacher! There was a shaykh here who wrote the answer and gave it to me and left the gathering."

If teaching and learning are accompanied by purification of the soul, desiring Allah, and seeking the truth, then Allah will take one's hand and come to their aid. It is narrated regarding Sayyid Shaftī that his condition would completely change during the night-time. His servant narrates how he would weep and wail during his night-time worship. Engaging in discussions of knowledge during the day but having states of weeping, wailing, humility and submission before Allah during the night-time. Knowledge should bestow such states

on a person, and if such states are not acquired then he is not on the correct path of acquiring knowledge.

3. Staying Aloof from Stinginess

One of the traits that learned individuals may become afflicted with, is stinginess when it comes to sharing their knowledge with those who have the capability of acquiring it. Stinginess with regards to anything is a blameworthy trait, but with regards to knowledge it is even uglier. A stingy person thinks that by giving, his possessions will decrease while the reality is the opposite. If he gives, his possessions will only increase. We are such that to whatever extent we give away for the sake of Allah, either more is given to us, or our existence grows. For example, if a person gets rid of his stinginess by giving money to the poor, apparently it seems that he has fallen into financial constraints. In reality however, his existence has grown. Every good attribute of a person is such, attaining it causes a dimension of the person's being to grow. Such is the case with knowledge as well. In fact, all a person's other perfections go back to knowledge. Therefore, if at any point the preliminaries were available for giving knowledge and the person does not give and he does not compensate for this in the future, then slowly Allah takes away that knowledge from him.

4. Not Considering Oneself Independent in Comprehending Realities

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if a scholar conceals his knowledge, if he is ill-natured, if he acts as if he has done a favour to others, or if he acts haughtily towards them, then by these acts he will be prevented from attaining knowledge and many other realities.

One of the inclinations that Allah has put inside a person is the innate inclination towards searching for and attaining reality. Therefore, attaining realities is not limited to a particular group of people. A person must strive, as the Qur'ān has commanded:

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَىٰ

> That nothing belongs to a person except that which he strives for, and that he will soon be shown his endeavour, then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward. (53:39-41)

A person can solve his academic problems by striving, exerting efforts, and treading the correct path. But he must recognize that both his efforts as well as him being given this knowledge is truly coming from Allah.[i] All he does is prepare the preliminaries. In this way, a teacher must not arrogantly think that he is independent in comprehending realities because such arrogance causes him to become ill-natured in teaching.

5. Humility

A person is free with regards to acquiring knowledge, for everyone has an independent ability to think and seek knowledge. However, this independence and exerting efforts to acquire knowledgeable must not cause us to think highly of ourselves and in turn disrespect or think nothing of those who were the means for us to attain this knowledge. Rather, the greatness of our teachers and the eminent personalities must be preserved. Humility is a desirable trait for everyone, but especially for someone who seeks knowledge, whether they are a teacher or a student. Sometimes, the humility of a teacher towards his students is more befitting because the student—by virtue of being a student—already has a kind of humility before his teacher. However, the teacher is in the position of imparting knowledge, and it is as if he considers himself a true possessor of something, whereas in reality the giver of knowledge is Allah. Thus, it has been mentioned in the supplication for studying that:

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i. Qur'ān 53:42.

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَخْرِجْنی مِنْ ظُلُماتِ الْوَهْمِ وَ اَكْرِمْنی بِنُورِ الْفَهْمِ
اَللّٰهُمَّ افْتَحْ عَلَيْنا اَبْوابَ رَحْمَتِكَ وَانْشُرْ عَلَيْنا خَزائِنَ عُلُومِكَ
بِرَحْمَتِكَ يا اَرْحَمَ الرّاحِمينَ

O Allah! Bring me out of the darkness of imagination and honour me with the light of comprehension. O Allah! Open the doors of Your mercy and unfold the treasures of Your knowledge for us. By Your mercy, O the Most Merciful of the merciful.[i]

If a person has a feeling of self-conceit and looks down on others while teaching, this causes him to ignore the truth and only pay attention to his own knowledge and understanding. Such a state can cause him to explode when someone asks only one or two questions! If a person is like this, then Allah takes away from him the greatness and luminosity of his knowledge and, as Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has said, it also removes the station he had in the hearts of people.

6. Adherence to the Truth in Practice

When a person comprehends an aspect of the truth, it is because Allah has made him understand this. Hence, he must be thankful, and as a means of being thankful he should convey that knowledge to others. In this process, at times he may make a mistake in attaining the truth, relying on his own understanding of the matter. However, if he truly seeks the truth, he will not persist on this incorrect understanding till the end. Rather, he will accept his mistake whenever he is reminded of it. Such a person is given providential help, regardless of whether they are a teacher or a student. But if they do not have such a spirit then they have prohibited themselves from reaching realities.

A prominent theologian belonging to a particular religion asked Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) questions about religious

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i. al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, p. 1045.

teachings and in the end, he submitted to the Imam and believed in his Imāmah.[i] This is as opposed to others who presented their own opinion in front of the Imams (peace be upon them) while claiming to have knowledge and understanding. Moreover, they did not do so as a question and to understand, but rather to show off and gather their own followers. Abū Ḥanīfah was one such individual. Many a time he came to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) with his approach of *qiyās*[ii] and the Imam repeatedly silenced him with his proofs and made him understand that the approach of *qiyās* is invalid. In religious rulings there is no room for performing *qiyās* and giving one's own opinion, rather one must submit before the sources of law. Despite this, Abū Ḥanīfah stubbornly kept following his invalid approach.

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i. See the story of 'Imrān al-Ṣābī debating with the Imam: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 10, pp. 299-318.

ii. *Qiyās* is a method of deduction and inference based on analogy. One of the sources of deriving the laws of *sharī'ah* for the Ahl al-Sunnah, this method has been strongly reproached by the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). (Ed.)

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THE RIGHT OF THE SPOUSE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِمِلْكِ النِّكَاحِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَهَا سَكَناً وَ مُسْتَرَاحاً وَ أُنْساً وَ وَاقِيَةً وَ كَذَلِكَ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْكُمَا يَجِبُ أَنْ يَحْمَدَ اللَّهَ عَلَى صَاحِبِهِ وَ يَعْلَمَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ وَجَبَ أَنْ يُحْسِنَ صُحْبَةَ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَ يُكْرِمَهَا وَ يَرْفَقَ بِهَا وَ إِنْ كَانَ حَقُّكَ عَلَيْهَا أَغْلَظَ وَ طَاعَتُكَ بِهَا أَلْزَمَ فِيمَا أَحْبَبْتَ وَ كَرِهْتَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ مَعْصِيَةً فَإِنَّ لَهَا حَقَّ الرَّحْمَةِ وَ الْمُؤَانَسَةِ وَ مَوْضِعُ السُّكُونِ إِلَيْهَا قَضَاءُ اللَّذَّةِ الَّتِي لَا بُدَّ مِنْ قَضَائِهَا وَ ذَلِكَ عَظِيمٌ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of your subject through matrimony [your wife], is that you know that Allah has made her a source of tranquillity, relaxation, intimacy, and protection for you. Also, each one of you must praise Allah for the existence of their spouse and know that they are a blessing from Allah on them. It is obligatory to behave well with the blessing of Allah, respect it, and behave gently with it. Although, your right on her is heavier and your obedience is more obligatory on her with regards to what you want or do not want, as long as it is not a sin. And verily, being

> shown mercy and having intimacy is her right. And [also know that] her being the place of comfort is by fulfilling that pleasure and enjoyment which must be fulfilled, and that [right] is something great. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE NECESSITY OF EMPLOYING ONE'S FACULTIES ALONG THE PATH OF EXISTENCE

Out of His mercy, Allah has created all other beings for the human being and has brought them under his dominion.[ii] This is so that the human employs them to attain the aim of creation—which is none other than servitude of Allah—and so that he appropriately benefits from each one of them along the path that Allah has ordained. To realize such an objective, He placed different faculties in the human, one of which is the ability to procreate. By employing these faculties and inclinations in the way Allah has commanded, in reality, one of the responsibilities of the human's servitude is fulfilled.

If one refuses to act according to this responsibility and is inattentive to it, then he has not really accepted the path that Allah has set out for him. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

> النِّكَاحُ سُنَّتِي فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي
>
> Marriage is from my *sunnah* (conduct), and one who refrains from my *sunnah* is not from me.[iii]

This means that if someone chooses not to implement this law of Allah, it is as if he considers such a thing to be futile. Someone who deals with their inclinations in such a manner stands in defiance of the religious perspective. Some people may say that due to marriage, we are afflicted with poverty, helplessness, and other such problems. However, this is not true. Allah says:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 262.

ii. Qurʾān 14:32-33.

iii. al-Shaʿīrī, *Jamīʿ al-akhbār*, p. 101.

وَأَنكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِن
يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

> Marry off those who are single among you, and the upright among your male and female slaves. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace, and Allah is all-Bounteous, all-Knowing. (24:32)

Therefore, we ought to have a correct perspective regarding this desire and must not let the scarcity of provisions scare us. We should act on the responsibility designated to us by the holy *sharī'ah*, for if we do that then by His grace Allah will undoubtedly free us from need. The treasures of Allah's grace are expansive, and He is aware of His servant's circumstances.

THE INTELLECT AND SEXUAL DESIRE

Despite what was mentioned above, employing this faculty and other faculties without any limits, or without observing the conditions mentioned by Allah and the *awliyā'* of Allah, runs counter to the aim of creation and a person's faith. Servitude entails that a person submit to the commands given to him. As each one of his faculties develop, he must act in accordance with what that faculty requires. For example, when the faculty of intellect matures at a particular age, it drives a person towards certain activities whose potential did not exist before.

Based on the verses of the Qur'ān and the traditions, a person must employ his sexual desires in a manner that is in line with his innate nature. Although every one of these instincts and inclinations that have been placed in a person's nature are similar in one sense to the instincts of other animals, yet in other aspects they have specific rules and regulations. A person's sexual instinct must be employed in line with the intellect and with attention and compliance to the laws of Allah. When focusing a person's attention on utilizing this instinct, the Noble Qur'ān gives us this deep perspective:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained *mawaddah* and mercy between you.[i] There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect. (30:21)

By paying attention to this instinct, a person can understand that the sexual faculties are a sign of Allah's perfections. They have been deposited in a person's existence so that his innate monotheistic (*tawḥīdī*) nature can flourish and move in the direction of real perfection. In this verse, Allah introduces comfort and tranquillity as being the goal of marriage. Although comfort lies in employing other faculties as well, the comfort in marriage is a special kind of comfort. The attraction between someone and the opposite gender, is a special kind of attraction. As mentioned in the verse, this attraction is mixed with *mawaddah* and mercy. Love is a special attraction and an internal pull between two individuals, whereas mercy is a state wherein a person—whilst paying attention to the deficiencies of another person—develops sympathy for them and is moved to help them rid themselves of their deficiencies. *Mawaddah* is even more subtle than love. *Mawaddah* is that love whose effects are manifested in practice, for example in a marital relationship it is manifested by doing good and being close to each other.[ii]

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN AND ITS EFFECTS ON THEIR OBLIGATIONS

From the previous explanation, it becomes clear that to form a good family, it is necessary to employ the intellect as well as love and expressing one's emotions. Both men and women have these faculties of intellect and love. They can both choose a correct life

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i. The word *mawaddah* is explained in the upcoming sentences. (Ed.)

ii. al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 16, p. 374.

for themselves, one that has a high goal and employs the appropriate means of reaching that goal. However, in most cases the intellect is dominant over a a person's emotions, as opposed to women. For this reason and due to their respective bodily conditions, the *sharī'ah* has designated certain responsibilities on each gender that cannot be performed by the other. For example, taking care and nurturing children—which plays an important role in the creation of a righteous society—has been requested of women. Whereas physical activities have been requested of men. Thus, Allah's wisdom entails that women should not perform physically demanding activities, they should not take up difficult and demanding social responsibilities such as leadership, and they should not have close interactions with men. As Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said:

الْمَرْأَةَ رَيْحَانَةٌ وَ لَيْسَتْ بِقَهْرَمَانَة

A woman is a gentle flower, not an employer or a servant.[i]

Therefore, due to the way they are each created, both men and women have been deprived of certain things. Allah has ordained certain limitations when it comes to the interactions of all beings in this world with each other. There is no place for objection, for example a stone cannot say, "Why did I become a stone?" Nor can a plant say, "Why did I become a plant?" In the same way, with regards to interactions between men and women, it is true that there exist certain limitations for women. Various points have been mentioned about this in the sayings of the *awliyā'* of religion. On the other hand, however, certain responsibilities have also been lifted from their shoulders such as offensive war and leadership of the society. Even Sayyidah Fāṭimah (peace be upon her), whose intellect and spirit are superior to all the prophets aside from her father, was not charged with the role of leading society. Thus, those who believe in the wisdom of creation submit themselves to the wise commandments of Allah.

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i. al-Radī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, letter no. 31.

DISTINCTION IN MATERIAL ASPECTS BUT EQUALITY IN SPIRITUAL ASPECTS

As the faculty of lust develops, it warrants certain rulings and responsibilities that a person must abide by. One of these responsibilities is marriage and the formation of a family unit, which itself brings about other legal and *akhlāqī* responsibilities. However, none of the legal responsibilities of marriage make one needless of its *akhlāqī* responsibilities, and vice versa. The legal responsibilities—as mentioned in the holy *sharī'ah*—aim to ensure that the family system is managed in a correct manner. Unto this end, different obligations have been laid down for men and women. At the same time, some common responsibilities have also been ordained for both men and women and Allah has placed certain common capabilities within them.

Allah created human beings so that they become His vicegerents on the earth.[i] The station of God's viceregency means that human beings—not just men—attain a position such that their actions and attributes comprise of Allah's actions and attributes. They make themselves a manifestation of Allah's attributes of beauty and majesty. For this reason, He has given both men and women the common potential to grow spiritually and the ability to seek knowledge such that by utilizing these abilities and because of following the religion, they attain this station. To attain the lofty goal of the system of creation—which is proximity to Allah—there is one path for everyone, and that path is obeying the wise commandments of religion. However, along this journey that encompasses both genders, men and women have some specific differences and that is why in the Islamic system, women are absolved from certain responsibilities and some positions are not assigned to them.

Those specific matters that women have been deprived from are so that, firstly, their human and Godly dimension is protected. This allows them to develop that dimension such that they may attain the

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i. Qur'ān 2:30.

perfection appropriate to them. Secondly, it is so that human society remains protected from certain impurities that may arise due to the special attraction that women possess. Therefore, if there exists a difference between men and women, it is due to the characteristics of their existence. Each one of them has been created to fulfil a particular role. Despite this, the only criteria for distinction and nobility of one of them over the other is what is mentioned in this verse:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

> O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed, Allah is all-Knowing, all-Aware. (49:13)

Asmā' bint 'Umays is among those women who migrated to Ethiopia along with her husband Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, by the order of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). After her return from Ethiopia, she asked the wives of the Prophet, "Has any verse of the Qur'ān been revealed about us [women]?" They said, "No." She went to the Prophet and said to him: "Women are in loss." The Prophet asked, "For what reason?" She said, "Because they are not mentioned with goodness as the men are mentioned."[i] At this time the following verse was revealed:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ

i. al-Huwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, vol. 4, p. 277, no. 113.

وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

> Indeed the Muslim men and the Muslim women, the faithful men and the faithful women, the obedient men and the obedient women, the truthful men and the truthful women, the patient men and the patient women, the humble men and the humble women, the charitable men and the charitable women, the men who fast and the women who fast, the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard, the men who remember Allah greatly and the women who remember [Allah greatly]—Allah holds in store for them forgiveness and a great reward. (33:35)

As per this verse, faith (*īmān*) has eight different levels or characteristics, and men and women are equal in these various perfections. The result of having these perfections is also the same for them both, that is that Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward. He has not specified this great reward, as to how much it will be.

In addition to this, Allah has done a special favour to women which He has not done to men. He mentions two role models for the believers, both of whom are women: Āsiyah the wife of Fir'awn and Lady Maryam the daughter of 'Imrān.[i]

Therefore, in whichever situation they may be, human beings can attain their real perfection. Undesirable family, geographical, and social conditions as well as genetic issues do have an apparent effect on one's nurturing, but they cannot completely hinder an individual's growth. These matters are not the cause of one's faith or disbelief, rather they only have some influence.

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i. Qur'ān 66:11-12.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARRIAGE AND THE NECESSITY OF CAREFULLY SELECTING A SPOUSE

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says in this section that the right of the marital relationship is that you know that Allah has created this relationship to be a source of a person's tranquillity and comfort, and a place of rest for the body as well as the soul. A person needs someone to be intimate with in this world, and a means to protect himself from impurity. Allah has commanded mankind to form families and create marital relationships so that righteous individuals remain. [i]

The family is the first social grouping which a person chooses out of his own free will. All other social groupings are formed based on that. If this first selection takes place in accordance with the path and method told to us by the Holy *sharī'ah*, then marital life shall yield abundant benefits. Apart from having a positive influence on the apparent system of this world, these benefits will also influence the life of the hereafter.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH SPOUSE IN STRENGTHENING THEIR INTIMACY

Based on these points, the first principle in the relationship between a man and woman is that the process of managing the family must be in the man's hands. As has been said in the Noble Qur'ān:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ

Men are the managers of women. (4:34)

The meaning of 'management' in this verse is a type of management mixed with love and mercy, not a dictatorship! Moreover, obedience to man is obligatory only so long as his words and actions are lawful and based on the interests that Allah and His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) have specified.

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i. Qur'ān 24:32.

The wisdom and signs of Allah have entailed that two individuals with different temperaments, from different cultures and families, become united and help one another. It is only in this situation that the comfort and tranquillity—which have been mentioned as the aim of marriage in the Qur'ān—will make sense. 'Tranquillity' here means the tranquillity of all the dimensions of a person's existence. The faculty of a person's sexual desire is, in a certain manner, connected to the psychological dimension of a person. The strength of this connection is such that if his lust is not satisfied, even psychologically he cannot find tranquillity. If the wife and husband both accept this Divine wisdom in their creation and in the system of family, then their life will take on a Divine colour.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING THANKFUL FOR THE BLESSING OF A GOOD SPOUSE

The true blessing for a person is that he is under the guardianship (*wilāyah*) of Allah and of His *awliyā'*. Similarly, anything that causes this reality is itself a blessing. In this manner, everything that Allah bestows may be considered a blessing. In particular, the greatest of blessings is when a person finds a companion who can assist them in Allah's servitude. Allah will also question a person regarding such a blessing on the Day of Judgment.[i] For this reason, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that it is necessary a person be a good companion to Allah's blessing and respect it.

RATIONALITY INTERMINGLED WITH LOVE

Based on the saying of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), it is necessary that a person consider his marital relationship to be a Divine blessing that is a test as well as a means of attaining perfection. The husband and the wife must complement and complete each other, both moving towards human perfection. The Noble Qur'ān says that mercy must preside over the relationship between the two,

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i. Qur'ān 102:8.

they should look at each other in a respectful and honourable way. It should not be the case that the man considers his wife as a housekeeper or a servant, nor that the woman looks at the man as a servant or a slave that she bought.

Respect means that the wife and husband, in addition to paying attention to their obligatory responsibilities, must also pay attention to each other's personality and respect that. There should be the utmost closeness and intimacy between the wife and husband, and such closeness comes about by protecting each other's personalities. For example, they should address one another with respect, both in the presence of others or when they are at home. Of course, there are specific responsibilities for each of them which must be fulfilled as well. For example, the wife should not perform tasks outside of the house without her husband's consent.

When both sides dutifully fulfil their religious responsibilities, a sense of tranquillity comes about for both of them. At times, in the beginning of marriage, the two parties do not feel this tranquillity with respect to one other. Each is cynical and distrustful of the other. However, if chastity and purity is demonstrated for both sides, then the sense of tranquillity will follow and eventually it will not be necessary for the wife to ask permission for everything that she does. This only comes about because rationality intermingled with love has prevailed between them.

THE NECESSITY OF HELPING ONE OTHER

Each spouse should make gentleness and tolerance preside over their life so that their differences disappear. If one party stumbles and errs, it is not always necessary that their spouse point it out since this hurts the other person's soul and instead of accepting their own mistake, they show resistance. One of the aspects of tolerance in marital life is that spouses must not burden one another with tasks that are beyond a rational limit. By not overburdening one another, their mistakes will naturally decrease and in turn they will be less hurt by one another.

In the traditions and teachings of Islam there are many examples of spouses helping and serving one another. This point has been emphasized that to whatever extent one is capable of, they should help their spouse so that this small social group remains sound. For example, it has been mentioned in a tradition that a man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and said, "I have a wife who welcomes me whenever I come home and bids me farewell whenever I go out. Whenever she sees me in a state of sorrow, she asks, 'What has upset you? If it is due to your sustenance, then [don't worry for] that is not your responsibility. Someone else has taken up its responsibility [meaning Allah]. But if it is due to the matters of hereafter, then may Allah increase your sorrow.'" The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عُمَّالًا وَ هَذِهِ مِنْ عُمَّالِهِ لَهَا نِصْفُ أَجْرِ الشَّهِيد

Verily Allah has agents, and this woman is one of them.
For her there shall be half the reward of a martyr.[i]

Another example is seen in Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him). When he would enter the house, he would help Sayyidah Zahrā' (peace be upon her), even though the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) had specified the responsibilities of both the spouses.[ii]

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i. al-Sadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 389, no. 4369.

ii. al-Sha'īrī, *Jami' al-akhbār*, p. 021.

21

THE RIGHT OF THE SLAVE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِمِلْكِ الْيَمِينِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ خَلْقُ رَبِّكَ وَ لَحْمُكَ وَ دَمُكَ وَ أَنَّكَ تَمْلِكُهُ لَا أَنْتَ صَنَعْتَهُ دُونَ اللَّهِ وَ لَا خَلَقْتَ لَهُ سَمْعاً وَ لَا بَصَراً وَ لَا أَجْرَيْتَ لَهُ رِزْقاً وَ لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ كَفَاكَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ سَخَّرَهُ لَكَ وَ ائْتَمَنَكَ عَلَيْهِ وَ اسْتَوْدَعَكَ إِيَّاهُ لِتَحْفَظَهُ فِيهِ وَ تَسِيرَ فِيهِ بِسِيرَتِهِ فَتُطْعِمَهُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُ وَ تُلْبِسَهُ مِمَّا تَلْبَسُ وَ لَا تُكَلِّفَهُ مَا لَا يُطِيقُ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتَهُ خَرَجْتَ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُ وَ اسْتَبْدَلْتَ بِهِ وَ لَمْ تُعَذِّبْ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of your subject through ownership [your slave] is that you know that he is the creation of your Lord, and he is [like] your own flesh and blood. And know that you are only his owner, it is not the case that you created him as opposed to Allah. You did not create his hearing and sight; you did not provide his sustenance. Rather, it is Allah who has sufficed you in this regard. It is He who made him subservient to you, entrusted him with You, and placed him in your safekeeping. [Allah did this] so that you protect him for the sake of Allah and behave with him in accordance with the behaviour of Allah [in a

way that pleases Allah]. Hence, feed him from that which you eat and cover him with those clothes that you wear. Do not charge him with what [difficult work] he cannot bear. If you do not want him, then remove yourself from the Divine responsibility regarding him by exchanging him [with something or someone else], and by doing this you are not hurting any creation of Allah. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

ISLAM'S OPINION ABOUT SLAVERY

In every society, one of the things that transpired at some point in time was the issue of war between the Divine or the ruling system and the opposing systems, which resulted in the victorious party enslaving the conquered one. In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) presents the true perspective for someone who has taken up the responsibility of managing a slave's life. This true perspective is based on the goal of nurturing and training, and it ensures that a person does not forget his responsibilities of Allah's servitude during his interactions with his slave. Under the pretext of being that slave's guardian and master, he does not consider himself to have some special distinction, for doing so will cause him to remain deprived of Allah's proximity.

The Imam says that a slave is your Lord's creation, you are only his owner and have not created his existence or his body parts. You are not his provider. Rather, it is Allah who has brought him under your command and has made you His trustee in managing the affairs of the slave's life, so that you interact with him as per His commands. You must allow him to enjoy from that which you eat and wear, you have no distinction over him in this regard. You must not burden him with work that is beyond his power and responsibility. And if you are unable to manage him in a correct manner and in accordance with his human status, then you must free him or sell him so that he does not undergo pain and difficulty at your hands.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 262.

Even though historically, the system of slavery is limited to a specific period of Islamic history, yet in Islam, the system of slavery can come into existence again under certain conditions. After coming about, various rulings have been mentioned about it by the *awliyā'* of religion. These rulings allow both the master and the slave to reach perfection. At the advent of Islam, due to these rulings, some slaves were guided to the straight path and reached lofty levels of spiritual perfections. It has even been narrated that fifteen of the martyrs of Karbalā' were slaves.[i]

Another example is seen in how Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) used to take some slaves under his training and then free them at the end of the month of Ramadan.[ii] Also, the mothers of a number

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i. al-Samāwī, *Ibṣār al-ʿayn*, p. 128.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 46, p. 103, no. 93.

وَ مَا مِنْ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا وَ كَانَ يُعْتِقُ فِيهَا فِي آخِرِ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ مَا بَيْنَ الْعِشْرِينَ رَأْساً إِلَى أَقَلَّ أَوْ أَكْثَرَ وَ كَانَ يَقُولُ إِنَّ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى فِي كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ عِنْدَ الْإِفْطَارِ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ أَلْفِ عَتِيقٍ مِنَ النَّارِ كُلُّهُمْ قَدِ اسْتَوْجَبَ النَّارَ فَإِذَا كَانَ آخِرُ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ أَعْتَقَ فِيهَا مِثْلَ مَا أَعْتَقَ فِي جَمِيعِهِ وَ إِنِّي لَأُحِبُّ أَنْ يَرَانِيَ اللَّهُ وَ قَدْ أَعْتَقْتُ رِقَاباً فِي مِلْكِي فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا رَجَاءَ أَنْ يُعْتِقَ رَقَبَتِي مِنَ النَّارِ وَ مَا اسْتَخْدَمَ خَادِماً فَوْقَ حَوْلٍ كَانَ إِذَا مَلَكَ عَبْداً فِي أَوَّلِ السَّنَةِ أَوْ فِي وَسَطِ السَّنَةِ إِذَا كَانَ لَيْلَةُ الْفِطْرِ أَعْتَقَ وَ اسْتَبْدَلَ سِوَاهُمْ فِي الْحَوْلِ الثَّانِي ثُمَّ أَعْتَقَ كَذَلِكَ كَانَ يَفْعَلُ حَتَّى لَحِقَ بِاللَّهِ تَعَالَى

In a lengthy narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq about Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon them) and his interaction with his slaves, it is reported that, "There was no year except that, on the last night of the month of Ramadan, he would free about twenty slaves, give or take. And he would say, 'Verily Allah frees seventy million people from the fire of Hell every night in the month of Ramaḍan, all of whom deserved the fire. And on the final night of the month of Ramaḍan He frees the same amount that He freed in the entire month. Indeed, I love that Allah sees me while I have freed slaves that I owned in this world, in the hopes that He will free me from the fire of Hell.' And he would never employ a servant for more than one year. If he came to own a slave in the beginning of the year or in the middle, then on the night of Fitr he would free him and replace him with another in the second year, who again he would free in the same way. He used to act in this

of the Shī'ah Imams (peace be upon them) were also from among those pure and faithful slaves who were trained in the household of Imamate.[i] Therefore, the system of slavery in Islam—which comes into existence only in limited situations—is a system of religious and spiritual training. It is not the case that it is a system for exploiting and belittling the personality of human beings.

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manner until he returned to Allah."

i. Refer to the sections about Imam al-Riḍā, Imam al-Jawād and Imam al-Ḥujjah (peace be upon them) from the book *Muntahā al-āmāl* of Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī.

THE RIGHTS OF RELATIVES AND THOSE ONE IS CLOSE TO IN SOCIETY

22

THE RIGHT OF THE MOTHER

فَحَقُّ أُمِّكَ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا حَمَلَتْكَ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْمِلُ أَحَدٌ أَحَداً وَ أَطْعَمَتْكَ مِنْ ثَمَرَةِ قَلْبِهَا مَا لَا يُطْعِمُ أَحَدٌ أَحَداً وَ أَنَّهَا وَقَتْكَ بِسَمْعِهَا وَ بَصَرِهَا وَ يَدِهَا وَ رِجْلِهَا وَ شَعْرِهَا وَ بَشَرِهَا وَ جَمِيعِ جَوَارِحِهَا مُسْتَبْشِرَةً بِذَلِكَ فَرِحَةً مُوَابِلَةً مُحْتَمِلَةً لِمَا فِيهِ مَكْرُوهُهَا وَ أَلَمُهَا وَ ثِقْلُهَا وَ غَمُّهَا حَتَّى دَفَعَتْهَا عَنْكَ يَدُ الْقُدْرَةِ وَ أَخْرَجَتْكَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ فَرَضِيَتْ أَنْ تَشْبَعَ وَ تَجُوعَ هِيَ وَ تَكْسُوَكَ وَ تَعْرَى وَ تُرْوِيَكَ وَ تَظْمَأَ وَ تُظِلَّكَ وَ تَضْحَى وَ تُنَعِّمَكَ بِبُؤْسِهَا وَ تُلَذِّذَكَ بِالنَّوْمِ بِأَرَقِهَا وَ كَانَ بَطْنُهَا لَكَ وِعَاءً وَ حَجْرُهَا لَكَ حِوَاءً وَ ثَدْيُهَا لَكَ سِقَاءً وَ نَفْسُهَا لَكَ وِقَاءً تُبَاشِرُ حَرَّ الدُّنْيَا وَ بَرْدَهَا لَكَ وَ دُونَكَ فَتَشْكُرُهَا عَلَى قَدْرِ ذَلِكَ وَ لَا تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا بِعَوْنِ اللَّهِ وَ تَوْفِيقِهِ

The right of your mother is that you know that she carried you in a place that nobody carries anyone else, and she fed you with the fruit of her heart which nobody feeds anyone with, and she protected you with her ears, eyes, hands, legs, hair, skin and all her body parts. In doing

so, she was delighted and happy while also vigilant. And [during her pregnancy], she bore the unpleasantness, pain, heaviness, and sorrow of this period until the time when the [Divine] hand of power relieved her of you and brought you out to the earth. Then [after your birth], she was pleased with you being satiated while she was hungry, you being clothed while she was unclothed, you being quenched while she was thirsty, and you having a shadow cast over you while she was under the sun. She provided you with ease by facing difficulty herself, and she gave you the pleasure of sleep through not sleeping herself. Her womb was what contained you, her lap was what encompassed you, her breast was what quenched you, and her soul was what protected you. She tolerated the heat and cold of the world for you. Thus, be grateful to her to that same extent, and you are incapable of doing so except through Allah's help and success (*tawfīq*).[i]

SPECIAL ATTENTION TOWARDS THE MOTHER'S RIGHTS

Allah has specifically mentioned the mother's right in the Qur'ān:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا ۖ وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

We have enjoined the human to be kind to his parents. His mother has carried him in travail, and bore him in travail, and his gestation and weaning take thirty months. When he comes of age and reaches forty years, he says,

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 263.

> "My Lord! Inspire me to give thanks for Your blessing with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which please You and invest my descendants with righteousness. Indeed, I have turned to you in penitence, and I am one of the Muslims." (46:15)

In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) mentions some of the actions and states of a mother with respect to her child. Although these may also be found in some animals due to their natural instincts, the actions and states of a human mother—in addition to the instinctive dimension—also have human dimensions and the dimension of free-will. Moreover, the mother possesses positive and negative *akhlāqī* traits that prepare the grounds for the guidance and nurturing of her child and are influential in shaping the child's *akhlāq*. For this reason, as per traditions, the felicity or wretchedness of every individual takes form due to the temperaments and *akhlāq* of their mother. However, one must recognize that according to the Qur'ān and traditions, these matters are not the complete and final cause for a child to have a good or bad end. Rather, these matters just play a role in preparing the grounds. The key thing that determines a person's fate is his own free-will. That said, the above-mentioned matters are not without effects.

A person once came to the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and asked, "To whom should I do good?" He replied, "To your mother." The man asked, "Then whom?" Again, until he had asked it three times, the Prophet repeated, "To your mother." On the fourth instance he said, "To your father."[i]

The effect of spiritual and psychological interactions is more than the material ones. It is possible that a person fulfil his parents' material requirements, but with one inappropriate encounter he ruins all his efforts. Or alternatively, with one small and subtle action he wins their hearts in a manner that cannot be achieved even by spending an enormous amount of money. Allah says to His Prophet (peace

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 83, no. 93.

and blessings be upon him and his family):

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُل رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

> Lower the wing of humility to them mercifully and say, 'My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!' (17:24)

Naturally, when mercy is sought for them, a sense of spiritual relief comes about for them, and they also pray for their child.

23
THE RIGHT OF THE FATHER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ أَبِيكَ فَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ أَصْلُكَ وَ أَنَّكَ فَرْعُهُ وَ أَنَّكَ لَوْلَاهُ لَمْ تَكُنْ فَمَهْمَا رَأَيْتَ فِي نَفْسِكَ مِمَّا يُعْجِبُكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ أَبَاكَ أَصْلُ النِّعْمَةِ عَلَيْكَ فِيهِ وَ احْمَدِ اللَّهَ وَ اشْكُرْهُ عَلَى قَدْرِ ذَلِكَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of your father is that you know that he is the source of your existence, and you are a branch of him. Indeed, if he were not there, you too would not have existed. Thus, whenever you see something [a blessing] in yourself which astonishes [and pleases] you, then know that your father is the origin of that blessing for you [meaning that you have that blessing through your father]. And praise and thank Allah in proportion to that, and there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

ONE'S FATHER: THE SOURCE OF THE CHANNEL OF BLESSINGS

The more a person understands the foundation of the responsibilities of servitude, the deeper he can act according to those

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 263.

responsibilities. This is because awareness is the basis and the cause of the intellect reaching its maturity. In this section, the Imam explains that your father is your origin. Just as how the emanation of your existence from Allah is something good, in the same way the apparent source of your existence, which is your father, is also something good. This is the case even if he may have some aspects of evil within him. Then he says that if you see that you have power and resolve that impresses you, you should know that your father is the origin of this blessing. Hence, to that same extent, be grateful to Allah and to the channels of these blessings.

A person said to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "My father has become very old and weak. Should we carry him when he needs to relieve himself [when he wants to go to toilet]? The Imam said:

إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَلِيَ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُ فَافْعَلْ وَ لَقِّمْهُ بِيَدِكَ فَإِنَّهُ جُنَّةٌ لَكَ غَداً

> If you are capable of doing that, do it [yourself]. And prepare morsels for him [and feed him] with your own hands. Because this action will be a shield [from the fire] for you tomorrow [on the Day of Resurrection].[i]

From such advice we can appreciate the importance of emotional and human relationships, and how effective they are in attaining true felicity. They bring about warmth in the life of this world, increase one's sustenance (*rizq*), strengthen the love and affection between people, cause eminent attributes of the soul to be acquired, and attract the mercy of Allah in the world of the hereafter, about which the Qur'ān says:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

> The day when neither wealth nor children will avail, except him who comes to Allah with a sound heart. (26:88-89)

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 162, no. 13.

This sound heart is one that is free from the darkness and impurities of both actions and *akhlāq*. One of the most important causes of a person having a sound soul and mental state is him having a deep human and emotional relationship with his father and mother.

THE NECESSITY OF DOING GOOD TO PARENTS IN ALL SITUATIONS

When the Noble Qur'ān says:

لَن تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ

You will never attain [true] piety until you spend out of what you hold dear [in the way of Allah]. (3:92)

This doesn't just mean spending money. Rather, the scope of good deeds is vast and includes doing good to one's parents, whether that be when they are alive or after their death. Allah mentions doing good to one's parents immediately after mentioning His own servitude,[i] and He also commands that one must not behave badly with them:

فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ...

Do not say to them, "Fie!" [Which is the smallest of insults,] and do not chide them, but speak to them with noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them mercifully... (17:23-24)

A person said to Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him), "Should I supplicate for my parents if they do not recognize the truth?" The Imam said:

ادْعُ لَهُمَا وَ تَصَدَّقْ عَنْهُمَا وَ إِنْ كَانَا حَيَّيْنِ لَا يَعْرِفَانِ الْحَقَّ فَدَارِهِمَا فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَعَثَنِي بِالرَّحْمَةِ لَا بِالْعُقُوقِ.

Supplicate for them and pay charity on their behalf, and

i. Qur'ān 17:23.

> if they are alive and do not recognize the truth, then be tolerant with them. For verily the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said, "Allah has appointed me with mercy, not with *'uqūq*.[i] [ii]

When the *riḍā'ī* sister of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) came to him, he spread his cloak for her, but he did not behave in the same way, to the same extent, with his *riḍā'ī* brother.[iii] They asked the Messenger, "You did not behave with your brother as you did with your sister?" He replied:

لِأَنَّهَا كَانَتْ أَبَرَّ بِوَالِدَيْهَا مِنْه

Because she was better to her parents than him.[iv]

Therefore, one ought to behave with everyone in proportion to the extent of their perception and understanding.

A narrator asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "What is meant by [the verse], 'and do good to your parents?'"[v] The Imam said:

أَنْ تُحْسِنَ صُحْبَتَهُمَا وَ أَنْ لَا تُكَلِّفَهُمَا أَنْ يَسْأَلَاكَ شَيْئاً مِمَّا
يَحْتَاجَانِ إِلَيْهِ ... إِنْ أَضْجَرَاكَ فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ ... إِنْ
ضَرَبَاكَ فَقُلْ لَهُمَا غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمَا ... لَا تَمْلَأْ عَيْنَيْكَ مِنَ

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i. *'Uqūq* comes from the Arabic root *'aqqa* (عَقَّ) meaning to split or cleave. It is often used along with the word 'parents' (*'uqūq al-wālidayn*) to refer to one of the major sins in Islam: when a child troubles and hurts their parents by means of their speech or action. (Ed.)

ii. al-Ṭabarsī, *Mishkāt al-anwār fī ghurar al-akhbār*, p. 327.

iii. *Riḍā'* (breastfeeding) is one of the means of *maḥramiyyah*, meaning that when a child—with certain conditions that have been mentioned in the books of Islamic Law—is breastfed by a lady, the other children of this lady become *maḥram* to this child and are considered their *riḍā'ī* brothers and sisters. (Ed.)

iv. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 161, no. 12.

v. Qur'ān 17:23.

النَّظَرِ إِلَيْهِمَا إِلَّا بِرَحْمَةٍ وَ رِقَّةٍ وَ لَا تَرْفَعْ صَوْتَكَ فَوْقَ أَصْوَاتِهِمَا وَ لَا يَدَكَ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمَا وَ لَا تَقَدَّمْ قُدَّامَهُمَا.

Accompany them in a nice manner, and do not make them ask you for anything that they need [meaning before they even ask, you should fulfil their needs] ... and if they trouble you, do not say, "fie" to them [this word shows a very small level of disgust] ... and if they hit you, say to them, "may Allah forgive you" ... do not fill your two eyes by looking at them [do not stare at them] except out of mercy and sympathy, and do not raise your voice over theirs, nor your hand over theirs [when you give something to them, do not give it in a way that makes you look superior to them], and do not walk ahead of them.[i]

i. al-Kulaynī, Al-kāfī, vol. 2, p. 158, no. 1.

24
THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ وَلَدِكَ فَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ مِنْكَ وَ مُضَافٌ إِلَيْكَ فِي عَاجِلِ الدُّنْيَا بِخَيْرِهِ وَ شَرِّهِ وَ أَنَّكَ مَسْئُولٌ عَمَّا وُلِّيتَهُ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْأَدَبِ وَ الدَّلَالَةِ عَلَى رَبِّهِ وَ الْمَعُونَةِ لَهُ عَلَى طَاعَتِهِ فِيكَ وَ فِي نَفْسِهِ فَمُثَابٌ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَ مُعَاقَبٌ فَاعْمَلْ فِي أَمْرِهِ عَمَلَ الْمُتَزَيِّنِ بِحُسْنِ أَثَرِهِ عَلَيْهِ فِي عَاجِلِ الدُّنْيَا الْمُعَذِّرِ إِلَى رَبِّهِ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَهُ بِحُسْنِ الْقِيَامِ عَلَيْهِ وَ الْأَخْذِ لَهُ مِنْهُ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of your child is that you know that he is from you and is associated to you during these few days in this world, through his good and bad. You are answerable—with regards to yourself and with regards to him—for what has been entrusted to you, such as educating him in good conduct, pointing him in the direction of his Lord, and helping him in obeying Allah. Therefore, you shall either receive reward or shall be punished [because of this responsibility]. Regarding your child's affairs, act like those who during these few days in this world, beautify [their scroll of deeds] by their positive effect on their child, and are excused before their Lord because they [strived to nurture their child and] guarded

him well and sought Allah's help for him. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

PRESERVING THE LINEAGE: THE PURPOSE OF SEXUAL DESIRES

One of the dimensions of a person's existence that has been placed in him by Allah is his sexual desire. This desire develops at a particular age. Although its fulfilment is accompanied by pleasure, it is not simply a limited, material, and outward pleasure. Instead, Allah has placed this desire within a person's being for a higher purpose. In fact, whenever any inclination develops in a person and moves him to perform something, this should be considered from a Divine perspective, far removed from its animalistic or vegetative dimensions. Allah's purpose for the existence of a person's sexual desire is that through it, future generations come about, and the human race is preserved. In this manner His servitude can be manifested in these future generations. Unto this end, Allah has prepared the grounds for this and issued certain commands. Using his own comprehension, a person can understand the purpose of his creation and pursue it when employing his various faculties.

THE DIVINE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A CHILD AND HIS FATHER AND MOTHER

Even in animals and plants, a male and female of a particular species are necessary to beget a child. However, this relationship is more noble amongst humans. It is a human relation, and even beyond that it is a Divine relationship. For this reason, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that the good and bad of a child is linked to the parents. It has been narrated that a sparrow said to his wife, "Come close to me so that we may copulate, perchance Allah will grant us a child who shall remember Him." Prophet Sulaymān (peace be upon him), who understood the language of animals, was surprised by this

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 263.

statement, and said:

هَذِهِ النِّيَّةُ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مَمْلَكَتِي

This [logic and] intention is better than my rulership.[i]

Prophet Sulaymān (peace be upon him) said this because it was Divine logic. All animals and plants have such logic since they live under the guardianship and authority of Allah and are His servants.[ii]

The religion and the *sharī'ah* desire that the logic of the intellect and spirituality overshadow the different aspects of a person's existence. By having offspring, a mother and father become the means for spreading goodness or badness. They are the base for the spiritual and intellectual growth of their child, or alternatively for his *akhlāqī* decline. This is the case until the child reaches the stage of choice and freewill, wherein he influences his own felicity or wretchedness.

ACTIONS BEFORE THE BIRTH THAT AFFECT THE NURTURING OF THE CHILD

The recommended and disliked actions mentioned in the *sharī'ah* to be performed before birth, bring about good results and prepare the grounds for the child's future. Modern science has also proven this issue to some extent. The parents' genes pave the way for attributes to be transferred to the child. Similarly, observing the etiquettes that have been prescribed regarding sexual intercourse, the types of foods to eat, the particular times and places to engage in it, the particular *adhkār* to be recited, are all very influential.[iii] During pregnancy, it is necessary that the father and the mother take care of certain measures. For example, the father should be observant and careful with respect to the money he brings into the house which will be used

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 14, p. 95.

ii. Qur'ān 19:93.

iii. *Adhkār* is the plural of *dhikr*. Lexically the word *dhikr* means to remember or remind. As an Islamic term it is used to refer to the words and phrases by which Almighty Allah is mentioned, praised, thanked, glorified, or besought for help. (Ed.)

for the mother's sustenance. The mother must be particular about engaging in worship, distancing herself from prohibited actions, and having a connection to Allah and the *awliyā'* of Allah. All of these prepare the grounds for the child's training and nurturing. This is because the relationship between the child and parents is not just a material relationship, rather the child is also influenced by the motivations, conceptions, and imaginations of his parents.

A person along with all his attributes, has a relationship with his child. According to Islamic traditions, the foetus in the mother's womb—as well as all living beings—has a sense of feeling and understanding, it can comprehend. The advanced science of today also confirms this fact.

ACTIONS AFTER BIRTH FOR THE NURTURING OF THE CHILD

1. Adhān, Iqāmah and Giving Charity

One of the first recommended acts after the birth of a child is to recite the *adhān* and *iqāmah* in the right and left ear of the child, respectively. Also, to perform the *aqīqah* on the seventh day after birth and feed others with it, to shave the hair of the child and give the equivalent amount of the hair's weight in charity, all play a significant role in the formation of a religious and faithful disposition in the child.[i]

2. Choosing a Good Name

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

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i. Reading about these etiquettes during the days just before marriage is very beneficial. The book *Ḥilyah al-muttaqīn* and marriage section of jurisprudential books such as *Taḥrīr al-wasīlah* by Imam Khumaynī (may Allah be pleased with him) have good content in this regard.

حَقُّ الْوَلَدِ عَلَى وَالِدِهِ أَنْ يُحَسِّنَ اسْمَه

The right of the child upon his father is he chooses a good name for him.[i]

Every individual's name is a mark or an indication that can form their internal personality. If the name of virtuous individuals is given to a child, it is as if the father and mother have placed themselves and their child on the path of the *akhlāq* and the actions of these individuals.

3. Teaching and Learning

It is necessary that the parents teach their child to read and write, as well as other necessary knowledge, such as religious knowledge.[ii]

4. Marriage

When a child reaches the age of intellectual maturity and financial ability, it is necessary that the parents prepare the necessary conditions for his marriage. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has put this responsibility firstly on the father's shoulders because the responsibility of managing the family's life lies with him.[iii]

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i. al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 443.

ii. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 399.

...وَ حَقُّ الْوَلَدِ عَلَى الْوَالِدِ أَنْ يُحَسِّنَ اسْمَهُ وَ يُحَسِّنَ أَدَبَهُ وَ يُعَلِّمَهُ الْقُرْآن

... and the right of a child on the father is that he gives him a good name, gives him good training, and teaches him the Qur'ān

iii. al-Tabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 220.

مِنْ حَقِّ الْوَلَدِ عَلَى وَالِدِهِ ثَلَاثَةٌ يُحَسِّنُ اسْمَهُ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَةَ وَ يُزَوِّجُهُ إِذَا بَلَغ

From the right of the child on his father is three things, that he gives him a good name, he teaches him writing and he marries him when he becomes mature.

5. Cultivating Manners

Cultivating manners in a child does not happen by instructing him once, but rather, one must exert excessive efforts and give much importance to his nurturing. The child takes the conduct of his parents in the house as an example, thus their conduct in different aspects of life such as their worship and interactions with others should all be in accordance with the commandments of the *sharī'ah*. This must continue until the disposition of the child is formed based on these Islamic etiquettes and they become deep-rooted traits of his. Of course, this is not possible unless these etiquettes have already become the natural traits of the parents. The Qur'ān says the following regarding Prophet Ismā'īl (peace be upon him):

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِندَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا

> He used to command his family to [maintain] the prayer and to [pay] the *zakāt*, and he was pleasing to his Lord. (19:55)

However, commanding a child to recite prayers or perform other actions should be done in an appropriate way, with complete softness and intimacy, and not by threatening. It should be accompanied by mentioning the benefits and positive effects of those actions, as well as the bad effects of unworthy actions and of abandoning righteous actions.

6. Inculcating Love of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them)

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

أَدِّبُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ عَلَى ثَلَاثِ خِصَالٍ حُبُّ نَبِيِّكُمْ وَحُبُّ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَقِرَاءَةُ الْقُرْآنِ

> Train your child in three qualities: Love of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), love

of the Prophet's progeny (peace be upon them) and the recitation of the Qur'ān.[i]

One of the blessings of Allah is that He sent the Prophet and the Imams (peace be upon them) who possessed incomparable qualities and noble character. With their entire existence, they were at the service of mankind. For them to witness the hardships of the people was difficult to bear. As is mentioned describing the Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

There has certainly come to you an apostle from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress; he has deep concern for you and is most kind and merciful to the faithful. (9:128)

It is narrated that during the governance of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (peace be upon him), a companion of the Imam named Rumaylah was extremely sick with fever. On the day of Friday, he felt some respite and decided to attend the Friday prayers behind Amīr al-Mu'minīn. However, when the Imam climbed up the pulpit, Rumaylah's sickness returned. After delivering the sermons and finishing the prayers, the Imam went into a room and Rumaylah followed him. The Imam greeted him, saying:

يَا رُمَيْلَةُ رَأَيْتُكَ وَ أَنْتَ مُتَشَبِّكٌ بَعْضُكَ فِي بَعْض

O Rumaylah! I saw you writhing [out of pain].

Rumaylah recounted his sickness to the Imam and how he had decided to attend the Friday prayers behind him. The Imam then said:

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i. al-Rayshahrī, *Mīzān al-ḥikmah*, vol. 4, p. 3680.

يَا رُمَيْلَةُ لَيْسَ مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ يَمْرَضُ إِلَّا مَرِضْنَا بِمَرَضِهِ وَ لَا يَحْزَنُ إِلَّا حَزِنَّا بِحُزْنِهِ وَ لَا يَدْعُو إِلَّا أَمَّنَّا لِدُعَائِهِ وَ لَا يَسْكُتُ إِلَّا دَعَوْنَا لَهُ

O Rumaylah! There is not a believer that gets sick except that we also get sick due to his sickness, he does not become sad except that we are saddened by his sadness, he does not supplicate except that we say, "amen" at the end of his supplication, and he is not quiet except that we supplicate for him.[1]

The way to inculcate the love of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) in the hearts of children is to create an appropriate culture and mention their virtues at home, not just by wearing black clothes during mourning periods and buying sweets during their birth anniversaries! Of course, that is good, but it is not enough. Rather we ought to present the goodness of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and the ugliness of their enemies so that their love and a hatred towards their enemies is inculcated in our children's hearts. It is advisable that believers chose some of their vacations and travels through the year in such a way that they also perform the pilgrimage of the immaculate Imams, such as Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him). This has a positive effect in terms of the *wilāyah* of the children's souls. On the contrary, if parents are careless and commit actions against the *sharī'ah*, they will have an undesirable and bad influence on the disposition of their children which may result in the children becoming jaded and distanced from the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

7. Teaching Etiquette through One's Own Practice

One of the important responsibilities of the father and the mother is to nurture their child in a well-mannered way. It is true that the

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i. al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, vol. 1, p. 259, no. 1.

father is responsible for the management of the child's outward affairs, this is something obligatory on him. But in addition to that, he is also responsible for their spiritual affairs and *akhlāqī* issues. After the true guardians—that is Allah and His *awliyā'* who are the intermediaries of His grace—it is the father who is the outward guardian and is directly responsible for the affairs of the child. If the father neglects this important duty and disobeys Allah in this regard, he will be held accountable. The first relationship of a father with his child is established through his own behaviour. One's practical conduct must be based on the etiquette of the *sharī'ah* and the Islamic *akhlāq*. At times, a single incorrect encounter or an inappropriate act of anger can leave a deep undesirable effect on a child.

8. Teaching Prayers

The method of training children employed by the prophets and *awliyā'* can be derived from their supplications. The messenger of *tawḥīd*, Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him), supplicates for his child in this way:

> رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي ۚ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ
>
> My Lord! Make me one who maintains prayer, and my descendants [as well]. Our Lord, accept my supplication. (14:40)

When a person shows complete humility before the commandments of Allah in all the dimensions of his life—including humility during prayers—he can in a way become a preliminary for transferring such a disposition to his child. A child would naturally consider the actions of his father during prayer as his own example.

THE EFFECT OF THE PARENT'S ACTIONS ON THE NURTURING OF CHILDREN

A sound and religious relationship between the parents is extremely influential in forming a child's disposition. As a result of correctly upbringing their child, parents will be rewarded amply, but

due to neglecting this duty and incorrectly raising their child they will be punished. One day, Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be upon him) was passing by a grave in which a man was being punished. The following year when he was again passing by the same grave, the man was no longer being punished. He said:

يَا رَبِّ مَرَرْتُ بِهَذَا الْقَبْرِ عَامَ أَوَّلَ فَكَانَ صَاحِبُهُ يُعَذَّبُ ثُمَّ مَرَرْتُ بِهِ الْعَامَ فَإِذَا هُوَ لَيْسَ يُعَذَّب

O Lord! The first year that I passed by this grave, its inhabitant was being punished. Then I passed by it this year and he was not being chastised.

Allah revealed to him:

يَا رُوحَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ أَدْرَكَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ صَالِحٌ فَأَصْلَحَ طَرِيقاً وَ آوَى يَتِيماً فَغَفَرْتُ لَهُ بِمَا عَمِلَ ابْنُه

O spirit of Allah! Verily he had a righteous child who attained puberty. He restored a road and gave shelter to an orphan, so due to the actions of his child, I forgave him.[i]

It is possible that someone who had issues in their *akhlāq* or their actions, may not be punished in the world of *barzakh* because they correctly nurtured their child. And on the other hand, it is also possible that they are afflicted with hardship in that world because they did not concern themselves with nurturing the thoughts, actions, and behaviour of their child, and this negligence resulted in the child committing unworthy actions.

The Noble Qur'ān says the following in this regard:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ

Indeed, it is We who revive the dead and write what they have sent ahead and their effects [which they left behind]. (36:12)

i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 14, p. 287, no. 11.

The bad effects that parents will suffer because of a child they nurtured on the path of deviation and misguidance, is much more than the bad effects due to a corrupt place they leave behind. In the same way, the good effects parents will acquire due to a righteous child, are more than that of a good place they leave behind such as a masjid or a school.

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THE RIGHT OF THE BROTHER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ أَخِيكَ فَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ يَدُكَ الَّتِي تَبْسُطُهَا وَ ظَهْرُكَ الَّذِي تَلْتَجِئُ إِلَيْهِ وَ عِزُّكَ الَّذِي تَعْتَمِدُ عَلَيْهِ وَ قُوَّتُكَ الَّتِي تَصُولُ بِهَا فَلَا تَتَّخِذْهُ سِلَاحاً عَلَى مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ وَ لَا عُدَّةً لِلظُّلْمِ بِحَقِّ اللَّهِ وَ لَا تَدَعْ نُصْرَتَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَ مَعُونَتَهُ عَلَى عَدُوِّهِ وَ الْحَوْلَ بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ شَيَاطِينِهِ وَ تَأْدِيَةَ النَّصِيحَةِ إِلَيْهِ وَ الْإِقْبَالَ عَلَيْهِ فِي اللَّهِ فَإِنِ انْقَادَ لِرَبِّهِ وَ أَحْسَنَ الْإِجَابَةَ لَهُ وَ إِلَّا فَلْيَكُنِ اللَّهُ آثَرَ عِنْدَكَ وَ أَكْرَمَ عَلَيْكَ مِنْه

And the right of your brother is that you know that he is [your helper just like] your hand which you expand, he is [a support like] your back against which you lean, he is your honour that you rely on, and he is your strength with which you attack. Thus, do not take him as a weapon for sinning against Allah, or as a tool for oppressing the right of Allah. Never abandon assisting him regarding himself, helping him against his enemies, being an obstacle between him and his devils, advising and seeking good for him, and being attentive of him on the path towards Allah. Then if he is obedient to his Lord and answers Him

well [you must be his helper], and if not, then Allah must be more important and respectful in your eyes than him.[i]

A BROTHER: A SUPPORT IN PURSUING LOFTY GOALS

As a result of having religious members in it, a family pursues a common path and purpose. Moreover, because Islam has a profound view of society at large—including societies united by humanity or by faith—it has subtle and beautiful expressions regarding the role of a brother. For example, Islam introduces a brother as a support, a cause of honour, and one that a person can rely on. Naturally, a person requires the assistance of those around him to manage the affairs of his life. For this reason, those around him with whom he also has a family relationship are of more importance and a person's need for assistance is directed towards them.

THE CRITERIA OF BENEFITTING FROM A BROTHER'S STRENGTH

According to Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), a person can only overcome obstacles with the power and strength given by Allah. When he has a means of support and reliance such as a brother, he can utilize it in whichever direction he wishes. But he must not direct it in the way of sinning against Allah, rather he must employ it for the purpose of obeying Him. He must make use of his brother for this purpose and in return, he must also assist his brother in attaining such a goal, that is the obedience and servitude of Allah. Just as Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

ابْذُلْ لِأَخِيكَ دَمَكَ وَ مَالَكَ

Give your blood and wealth for your brother.[ii]

The primary criteria based on which one should engage in

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 263.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 50, no. 76.

relationships with others, is something beyond the emotional and material dimension. When it comes to family in particular, the spiritual relationship and Allah's obedience ought to be the axis around which family relationships rotate. So long as this spiritual dimension exists, there is no problem in seeking material and even spiritual assistance from one's brother. However, if this axis and this criterion is weak, that is if one's brother is not on this path, then one must try their utmost to guide him to this path by showing the right way to him, enjoining good, and forbidding evil. If one's efforts in this regard do not yield any results, then he must weaken and reduce his relationship with him but at the same time not sever it completely.

THE NECESSITY OF GUIDING AND HELPING BROTHERS, INCLUDING BROTHERS BY KINSHIP AND IN FAITH

In the continuation of his advice regarding the brother's rights, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says not to abandon helping him. This means that if one's brother has a weakness, if he falls short in managing his life, or if he is treading along a path of misguidance, then one must help him. For example, one can guide him and show him the right way or enjoin him to good and forbid him from evil. Such help is necessary because the first and foremost among those who deserve such assistance and guidance are the relatives of a person. That's why the Noble Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

> O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel will be people and stones. (66:6)

This means that a person must first seek his own guidance, and then he ought to be concerned about his family's guidance. One must pay attention to certain points when it comes to observing

the rights of their family members. Because of loving a member of the family and fulfilling their responsibilities, one must not act in a way that results in someone else's rights being neglected. Rather, one must divide their love among all members of the family and fulfil the responsibilities pertaining to each of them. One must strive to fulfil their rights and to guide them to the path of goodness and righteousness. Just as Imam al-Ḥasan (peace be upon him) says:

صَاحِبِ النَّاسَ بِمِثْلِ مَا تُحِبُّ أَنْ يُصَاحِبُوكَ بِه

> Keep company with people in the same way that you would like them to keep company with you. [i]

At the same time, the love of a person must have limits and boundaries. A person must not suppose that Allah's love cannot coexist with the love towards one's parents, spouse, and children. Rather, these types of love should fall under the love of Allah, and Allah Himself has enjoined us to have such love. In some supplications we ask from Allah:

اللَّهُمَّ ... أَسْأَلُكَ حُبَّكَ وَ حُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ وَ حُبَّ كُلِّ عَمَلٍ يُقَرِّبُنِي إِلَى حُبِّك

> O Allah! I ask You [that You give me] Your love, and the love of whoever loves You, and the love of every action that brings me closer to Your love. [ii]

However much one loves those he associates with in social relationships—including his brothers by kinship and in faith—and puts himself at their service to assist and guide them, then to that same extent Allah will cause him to grow spiritually and materially. Moreover, Allah will increase His blessings on such a person.

In the continuation of the same segment, the Imam (peace be upon him) says that one must not abandon assisting their brother against

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i. al-Daylamī, *A'lām al-dīn fī ṣifāt al-mu'minīn*, p. 297.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 95, p. 360.

his enemies. A person has both external and internal enemies, and the impact of the internal enemy (Shayṭān) is worse. Thus, one of the methods of guiding one's brother is to remind him how Shayṭān is his enemy, so that he does not succumb to his deviation. With his enmity, Shayṭān interferes in family relations and can create an incorrect mindset in a person, causing him to entertain false imaginations about his brother. By doing so, Shayṭān brings about tensions and the severance of relations between brothers. This is Shayṭān's job, he magnifies issues and presents them to a person's faculty of imagination. In this way he makes a person think negatively about others and destroys social relationships. For this reason, as much as possible, a person must interpret the actions of believers as being correct. One must be careful in family relations and should not pay heed to or act in response to each and everything that is said. Sometimes, conveying what was said among family members can cause tension and dispute.

GUIDANCE WITH SYMPATHY AND LOVE

In continuing the rights of brothers, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says to not abandon the following: assisting one's brother regarding himself, helping him against his enemy, becoming an obstacle between him and his devils, seeking good for him, and being attentive of him along the path of Allah. Specifically, one must not fall short in these matters if their brother is obedient to Allah, responding properly to His commands. If this is not the case, then Allah must have a higher priority and respect in one's eyes than their brother.

Sympathetic behaviour and seeking the best for others is firstly the responsibility of the prophets, and then it is the responsibility of believers. This responsibility is of even more importance with respect to one's family members. It should be based on complete kindness and performed by taking into consideration their best interests. One should strive to make everything that he thinks is good for his

family—be they worldly or spiritual matters—available for them, without expecting anything in return.

The first condition in giving advice and seeking good for someone is that a person must himself know what is in that person's best interests, be they worldly interests or those pertaining to the hereafter. Once he knows this, only then can he make these matters available for others, in a considerate way. If done like that, it will have a positive effect on the other person. But if this intention of doing good is manifested with harshness and anger, then it has a negative effect. Fundamentally, when admonishment is done with sympathy and consideration, it has positive psychological effects on the person even if the advice itself is incorrect. On the other hand, advice that is accompanied with harshness and anger has a negative psychological effect even if the content of the advice is correct. This is what is known as having prejudice or being biased towards the truth. In fact, the first level of supporting the truth is to possess this state of considerately seeking the best for others.

THE TIME TO CUT OFF AND THE TIME TO BE FRIENDLY, FOR THE SAKE OF GUIDANCE

The purpose behind giving advice is to guide people and help them reach their best interests, in accordance with what the religion has considered to be best. To help this advice be effective, it is necessary that one's behaviour with others should be such that he pays attention to them, acts in a warm and friendly way, and has a smiling face, even if the other person is not acting according to the *sharī'ah*. As per the saying of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), if your brother accepts the truth by means of reasoning, or soft and gentle speech, then you have no other responsibility. However, if he does not accept the truth, then your relationship with Allah is more important than the relationship of brotherhood. In such a situation, you can give him the cold shoulder or even express anger, to stop him from deviating. If a believer is torn between choosing to sever his relationship with Allah or to sever a temporary relationship with

his brother, he must choose to sever his temporary relationship with his brother. This does not mean that he has committed *qaṭʿ al-raḥim*, rather he has reduced his relations with the goal of positively affecting and influencing his brother.

This behaviour is prominent in Imam ʿAlī's (peace be upon him) conduct (sīrah). To guide his brother ʿAqīl, Imam ʿAlī first admonished him. But because of ʿAqīl's stubbornness and due to some other factors, the Imam was even ready to punish him. However, this stubbornness on the part of ʿAqīl had a purpose, he wanted to clarify the truth for himself. He wanted to know to what extent his brother ʿAlī was willing to go in defending the truth of Islam. He wanted to see whether the religion which ʿAlī was defending was worth so much that he was ready to punish his own brother for it. After this incident, ʿAqīl understood that Imam ʿAlī is someone who, for the sake of truth, is ready to stand against every falsehood.

THE BLESSINGS OF SILAT AL-RAHIM AND THE PUNISHMENT OF QAṬʿ AL-RAHIM [i]

The term *ṣilat al-raḥim* in the traditions includes close family members as well as distance relatives. *Ṣilat al-raḥim* has been given abundant importance in traditions and many consequences in this world and the hereafter have been mentioned for it. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

أَعْجَلُ الْخَيْرِ ثَوَاباً صِلَةُ الرَّحِم

> The action that brings about rewards the fastest is *ṣilat al-raḥim*.[ii]

One's *arḥām* or relatives, have been classified as follows: first one's father and mother, then their brother and sister, next their distant

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i. *Ṣilat al-raḥim* can be translated as establishing bonds with one's relatives, as opposed to *qaṭʿ al-raḥim* or cutting off from them, which is a major sin in Islam. A more detailed explanation will be provided by the author (may Allah protect him) in the upcoming pages. (Ed.)

ii. al-Shaʿīrī, *Jamiʿ al-akhbār*, p. 071.

relatives, and last their friends. It has been mentioned in a tradition that:

سِرْ سَنَتَيْنِ بَرَّ وَالِدَيْك

If the distance between you and your parents is [such that it will take] two years, do good to them [go and meet them].[i]

Also, it is mentioned regarding other relatives that:

سِرْ سَنَةً صِلْ رَحِمَك

Travel for a year so that you can establish a bond with your relatives [by visiting them].[ii]

When a person's soul is satisfied with regards to his outward relationships and when his family environment is sound and full of love and intimacy, then he acquires the necessary spiritual and mental tranquillity to engage in worship and Allah's servitude.

Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يُنْسَأَ فِي أَجَلِهِ وَ يُزَادَ فِي رِزْقِهِ فَلْيَصِلْ رَحِمَه

One who likes that his age and sustenance increases, then he should establish bonds with his relatives.[iii]

Some people think that by hosting guests, they will fall into financial difficulty while being oblivious of the fact that this action brings about abundant goodness, especially when the guests are one's relatives. Hosting guests does away with physical illnesses and even more so, spiritual, and psychological illnesses such as suspicion and animosity. One who is angry with his close relatives should embrace them in a hug so that this blood relationship causes the fire of his anger to be extinguished.[iv]

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 361.

ii. Ibid.

iii. al-Ṣadūq, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (peace be upon him), vol. 2, p. 44, no. 157.

iv. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 15, p. 363, no. 19.

At times, deviated ways of thinking can strain family relationships, whereas believers must strive to suffice themselves with performing what is obligatory, refraining from what is prohibited, and then leave aside other expectations. By doing so, not only will many of these relationships be rectified but, as a result of *ṣilat al-raḥim*, such a believer's actions will become pure, he will acquire good traits within himself, and his accounting on the Day of Judgment will become easy.[i]

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

صِلُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ وَ لَوْ بِالسَّلَام

Establish bonds with you relatives even if it is by saying *salām*.[ii]

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ ع أَنَّهُ ذُكِرَ عِنْدَهُ الْغَضَبُ فَقَالَ إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَغْضَبُ حَتَّى مَا يَرْضَى أَبَداً وَ يَدْخُلُ بِذَلِكَ النَّارَ فَأَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ غَضِبَ وَ هُوَ قَائِمٌ فَلْيَجْلِسْ فَإِنَّهُ سَيَذْهَبُ عَنْهُ رِجْسُ الشَّيْطَانِ وَ إِنْ كَانَ جَالِساً فَلْيَقُمْ وَ أَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ غَضِبَ عَلَى ذِي رَحِمٍ فَلْيَقُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَ لْيَدْنُ مِنْهُ وَ لْيَمَسَّهُ فَإِنَّ الرَّحِمَ إِذَا مَسَّتِ الرَّحِمَ سَكَنَتْ.

It is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq from his father (peace be upon them) that anger was mentioned to him. He said, "Verily a person can become so angry that he will never be pleased until he [commits a sin due to which he] enters the Fire. Therefore, any person who becomes angry while he is standing, he should sit down, for indeed the filth of Shayṭān will leave him. And if he is sitting, he should stand. And any person who becomes angry with a relative of his, should approach them and touch them, for when a relative touches another relative they calm down."

i. Ibid., vol. 21, p. 534, no. 4.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ: صِلَةُ الْأَرْحَامِ تُحَسِّنُ الْخُلُقَ وَ تُسْمِحُ الْكَفَّ وَ تُطَيِّبُ النَّفْسَ وَ تَزِيدُ فِي الرِّزْقِ وَ تُنْسِئُ فِي الْأَجَلِ.

From Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), "Establishing bonds with one's relatives beautifies one's character, opens their hand [makes them generous], makes their soul pure, increases their sustenance delays their death."

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 57.

Ṣilat al-raḥim can be performed by simply not being uninformed about one's relatives. One should meet them, and if that is not possible then he should reach out to them by writing letters or making a phone call. If even that is not possible then at the least, he should pray for them, asking Allah that their worldly and spiritual sustenance increases, and that badness is distanced from them.

Every sin brings about its own undesirable effects and as per the saying of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), one of the sins which causes early death is to sever bonds with one's relatives.[i] The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

لَا تَنْزِلُ الرَّحْمَةُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ فِيهِمْ قَاطِعُ الرَّحِمِ

> The mercy of Allah does not descend upon a people among whom there are individuals who sever bonds with their relatives.[ii]

This means that the evil effects of this sin, apart from affecting the person himself, also engulf society. Therefore, our responsibility is that if two people have cut off their relationship with each other, then we ought to intermediate between them. We must work to re-establish their relationship, especially if they are relatives so that the Divine chastisement does not engulf us.

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 70, p. 375, no. 12.

... وَ الذُّنُوبُ الَّتِي تُعَجِّلُ الْفَنَاءَ قَطِيعَةُ الرَّحِمِ ...

... and those sins that hasten death are cutting off with one's relatives ...

ii. al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, vol. 15, p. 184.

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THE RIGHT OF THE MASTER WHO FREED HIS SLAVE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُنْعِمِ عَلَيْكَ بِالْوَلَاءِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ أَنْفَقَ فِيكَ مَالَهُ وَ أَخْرَجَكَ مِنْ ذُلِّ الرِّقِّ وَ وَحْشَتِهِ إِلَى عِزِّ الْحُرِّيَّةِ وَ أُنْسِهَا وَ أَطْلَقَكَ مِنْ أَسْرِ الْمَلَكَةِ وَ فَكَّ عَنْكَ حِلَقَ الْعُبُودِيَّةِ وَ أَوْجَدَكَ رَائِحَةَ الْعِزِّ وَ أَخْرَجَكَ مِنْ سِجْنِ الْقَهْرِ وَ دَفَعَ عَنْكَ الْعُسْرَ وَ بَسَطَ لَكَ لِسَانَ الْإِنْصَافِ وَ أَبَاحَكَ الدُّنْيَا كُلَّهَا فَمَلَّكَكَ نَفْسَكَ وَ حَلَّ أَسْرَكَ وَ فَرَّغَكَ لِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّكَ وَ احْتَمَلَ بِذَلِكَ التَّقْصِيرَ فِي مَالِهِ فَتَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ أَوْلَى الْخَلْقِ بِكَ بَعْدَ أُولِي رَحِمِكَ فِي حَيَاتِكَ وَ مَوْتِكَ وَ أَحَقُّ الْخَلْقِ بِنَصْرِكَ وَ مَعُونَتِكَ وَ مُكَافَئَتِكَ فِي ذَاتِ اللَّهِ فَلَا تُؤْثِرْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَكَ مَا احْتَاجَ إِلَيْكَ

And the right of the one who confers a favour on you by *walā'* [freeing you from slavery] is that you know that he spent his wealth for you, he removed you from the disgrace and estrangement of slavery and made you enter the honour and ease of freedom, he freed you from the shackles of being owned, he untied the rings [of the chain] of slavery that were on you, he brought about the delightful

> fragrance of honour for you, he removed you from the prison of subjugation, he repelled difficulty from you, he spread out the tongue of justice for you,[i] and he made the wealth of the entire world permissible for you. He made you the owner of yourself, untied your shackles, and left you free to worship Your Lord. Moreover, by doing so he tolerated a decrease in his own wealth. Thus, know that after your relatives, he is the nearest one to you amongst all people, both during your life and after your death. He is more deserving of your help, aid, and protection in the path of Allah, than all other beings. Thus, do not prefer your own self over him when he needs your assistance.[ii]

The discussion pertaining to masters and slaves is one of those discussions that was relevant at the advent of Islam. That was a time when enemies were fighting against the rulership of Islam, which resulted in many battles taking place. When the Islamic forces were victorious over the forces of disbelief and polytheism, they took prisoners to diminish the apparent majesty and greatness of their enemy, and so that the captives would be reared under the Islamic system of education and training. For this reason, legal and *akhlāqī* commandments pertaining to their rights have been prescribed in Islam. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) would also keep slaves and after some time had passed and they had been trained, he would free them. In these two sections, Imam mentions certain *akhlāqī* issues regarding the relationship between a master and his slave. By paying attention to the nature of this relationship as articulated by the Imam, a slave can appropriately observe the rights of his master, and vice versa.

However, since the issue of slavery is non-existent at this time, its rulings are not something people are concerned with today. Despite this, its discussion in the subject of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) is

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i. An apparent reference to how the master has used his tongue to free the slave. (Ed.)

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 264.

still necessary to illustrate the advanced rulings of Islam. We shall not speak about this right any further, but the responsibilities discussed in this section could be extended to encompass other instances by expanding and generalizing its contents. We will indicate this further in the next section.

27

THE RIGHT OF THE FREED SLAVE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُ مَوْلَاكَ الْجَارِيَةِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَتُكَ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَكَ حَامِيَةً عَلَيْهِ وَ وَاقِيَةً وَ نَاصِراً وَ مَعْقِلًا وَ جَعَلَهُ لَكَ وَسِيلَةً وَ سَبَباً بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَهُ فَبِالْحَرِيِّ أَنْ يَحْجُبَكَ عَنِ النَّارِ فَيَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ ثَوَابٌ مِنْهُ فِي الْآجِلِ وَ يَحْكُمُ لَكَ بِمِيرَاثِهِ فِي الْعَاجِلِ إِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ رَحِمٌ مُكَافَأَةً لِمَا أَنْفَقْتَهُ مِنْ مَالِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَ قُمْتَ بِهِ مِنْ حَقِّهِ بَعْدَ إِنْفَاقِ مَالِكَ فَإِنْ لَم تَقُمْ بِحَقِّهِ خِيفَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ لَا يَطِيبَ لَكَ مِيرَاثُهُ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the slave whom your blessing passed over [by you freeing him], is that you know that Allah has made you his supporter, protector, helper, and refuge. And Allah made him an intermediary between Himself and you. It is worthy that he saves you from the fire, for that is your reward in the hereafter. And in this world, [your reward is that] he gives you his inheritance if he does not have any relatives, as a recompense for the expenses you spent on him and the rights of his that you fulfilled after spending your money.[i] Hence, if you did not fulfil

i. This is a reference to a discussion in Islamic jurisprudence. (Ed.)

> his rights then it is feared that his inheritance would not be agreeable [and permissible] for you. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

By keeping in mind that which was indicated in the previous section about generalizing these discussions, it becomes clear that Islam—due to the broad and profound nature of its teachings—even pays attention to the rights of someone that a person has done good to. Moreover, the Islamic perspective of these rights is such that it causes a person to further increase his goodness towards that individual. That perspective is that a person must realize it is Allah who placed that individual on his path such that he could then prefer that individual and sacrifice for him, seeking to fulfil his material and spiritual needs. In particular, when this individual to whom the good was done is a weak and needy individual—such as a slave, or someone who is destitute, or a sick individual who has no guardian—then he must continuously be treated with mercy.

Such a perspective causes a person's soul to grow such that when serving and doing good to others, not only does he not become proud and make the other party feel like he has done them a favour, but within himself a person feels indebted to that needy individual. This is because that individual who happened to come along his path provided him with an opportunity such that by helping him, his own spiritual perfections were formed and solidified.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, pp. 264-265.

28

THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO DOES GOOD TO YOU

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ ذِي الْمَعْرُوفِ عَلَيْكَ فَأَنْ تَشْكُرَهُ وَ تَذْكُرَ مَعْرُوفَهُ وَ تَنْشُرَ لَهُ الْمَقَالَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ وَ تُخْلِصَ لَهُ الدُّعَاءَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ قَدْ شَكَرْتَهُ سِرّاً وَ عَلَانِيَةً ثُمَّ إِنْ أَمْكَنَ مُكَافَأَتُهُ بِالْفِعْلِ كَافَأْتَهُ وَ إِلَّا كُنْتَ مُرْصِداً لَهُ مُوَطِّناً نَفْسَكَ عَلَيْهَا

> And the right of the one who does good to you is that you be grateful to him, remember his goodness, spread good words about him, and sincerely supplicate for him when in the [private] state between yourself and Allah, the Immaculate. If you do this, then you have thanked him in open and in secret. Thereafter, if it is possible to recompense him in action, do so. But if it is not possible, wait for the opportunity to do so and prepare yourself for this.[i]

The word good has a broad meaning, as was mentioned in previous discussions. Keeping this in mind, when a person performs

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 265.

a good act towards us, then he acquires a right on us. Individuals who perform good deeds towards others can be divided based on the different stages of a person's life. First are the father and mother who do good to a person, next are the teacher and anyone who plays a role in nurturing or training him. After marriage there is his spouse, who strives and takes efforts to perform good deeds for him. All these individuals do good for a person and have rights on him.

THE NECESSITY OF RECOMPENSING GOODNESS IN PROPORTION TO IT

If a person performs an act of goodness for a person, then as dictated by the innate (*fiṭrī*) comprehension, his goodness ought to be recompensed. In accordance with this innate comprehension the Noble Qur'ān says:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

Is the requital of goodness anything but goodness? (55:60)

The Noble Qur'ān sometimes presents matters that can be comprehended by a sound innate disposition (*fiṭrah*), in the form of questions. This is so that those individuals whose innate nature is on the verge of being extinguished, or those who are heedless of it, are awakened and pay attention to the call of this innate nature. In this verse, it is not just goodness done by Allah towards His servants that is intended. That is not the only type of goodness that a person must repay. Rather, this verse also includes goodness done to him by others, even by other beings. A person has a responsibility even towards those animals and plants that make goodness reach him. Showing goodness to each being is done so in a manner appropriate to that being.

The relationships between human beings are more subtle in nature and that's why one must always try to do good to others and recompense their goodness. If a person has such an outlook and employs such a method when it comes to his marriage and his family life,

then an environment of love shall preside over his life. Love and affection shall come about between him and his spouse, and they will be grateful to one another for the good deeds they perform.

Gratitude should be shown in proportion to the goodness that was performed. If someone confers a huge favour on a person and he responds by simply saying "thank you," this causes deprivation for him. The Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) have made a person pay attention towards these spiritual qualities so that he is not deprived, and so that his blessings increase. Allah says in the Noble Qur'ān:

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

> If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in your blessing]. (14:7)

If the gratitude that a person displays is in proportion to the goodness performed for him, then it shall further prepare the grounds for an increase in his blessings. For this reason, those who perform good deeds prefer to confer their goodness on those who are grateful, rather than those who are ungrateful and show unkindness in return to the goodness of others. This manner of showing gratitude to the goodness of others also applies between students and teachers. If a person constantly remembers those whom he benefitted from academically, this brings about astonishing spiritual and even academic effects for him. One of the great contemporary personalities said, "The goodness that reached me through remembering my teachers well, is more than what I acquired through reflection and engaging in discussions."

DIFFERENT METHODS OF BEING GRATEFUL FOR THE GOODNESS OF OTHERS

1. Verbal Gratitude

One of the ways of being grateful is by reminding the person who did good of what he performed and thanking him. In religious texts about spiritual development, we have been reminded to consider

our own good deeds as little so that they do not appear magnified to us and hinder us from performing more good deeds. On the other hand, we have been enjoined to pay attention and give importance to the good deeds of others and to mention them, so that they are not forgotten and so that the rights of these people may be fulfilled.

2. Spreading Good Deeds in Society

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that a person should spread the good deeds of others by speaking well about them and repeatedly mentioning them. By doing so, a person can begin to express his gratitude to that person. By mentioning the good deeds of that person, he fulfils their right and is not considered ungrateful.

However, one should keep in mind that sometimes some people feel distressed when their good deeds are mentioned. In such situations, one should be considerate of how they feel and refrain from mentioning their good deeds.

3. Supplicating for the Performer of Goodness

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that a person must also sincerely supplicate for that individual. If a person is not pleased with his good deeds being mentioned, then he can still supplicate and pray for him.

In social relationships, sometimes Shayṭān manifests someone's bad deeds such that their good deeds are erased in the eyes of others. Therefore, a person must be attentive to the good actions and qualities of others in his relationships. He must deal with everything in the manner that is appropriate to it, and he should not forget about the good deeds of others due to their bad deeds.

An ignorant person is always in one of two extremes: laxity or excessiveness. On some occasions, when he sees an individual perform a good deed, he puts his trust in him completely. He considers all his actions to be right, justifies these actions, and does not bother to research and ponder on them. By doing so, this ignorant person

acts in a naïve way, and is deprived of attaining and understanding reality. On other occasions, by seeing an action that appears to be wrong, an ignorant person develops a bad opinion about the doer of the action. He considers all his actions as being wrong and unjust and will not accept any justification or explanation.

One of the responsibilities of a person is to sincerely supplicate for those who have bestowed goodness on him. In particular, some good acts play a key role in a person's success in this world and the hereafter. For example, one's nurturing and education are essential in this regard. Hence, one must exert efforts when it comes to the rights of their teacher or the one who took up the responsibility of nurturing them. This is incumbent even if they have passed away, because in the realm of *barzakh* there is still progress and growth. When a person supplicates for the deceased, it elevates their spiritual level and causes them to be pleased with him.

GRATITUDE: A CAUSE FOR GOODNESS TO INCREASE

Keeping in mind the good actions performed by others and being grateful for it shows that a person himself is on the path of goodness and that his soul has grown and been nurtured through goodness. Allah further expands and increases that goodness for such a person, in all aspects of his life, including this world and the hereafter. Of course, this gratitude must not just be verbal, it must also be practical. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that in response to goodness, a person must act with an equivalent goodness and assist the other person in the same way. The Noble Qur'ān also says the following regarding repaying the goodness performed by others:

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا

When you are greeted with a salutation, greet with a better one than it, or return it. (4:86)

The one who precedes and first performs the act of goodness has a higher status than the one who responds and recompenses him,

because he was the source of spreading goodness. If a person does not have the financial or physical strength necessary to appropriately repay the goodness performed by others, it is still necessary that he try to perform some sort of favour and compensate them to the extent that he can. By doing so, he is not deprived of this matter and this goodness. In this regard, Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

أَطِلْ يَدَكَ فِي مُكَافَاةِ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ إِلَيْكَ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَقْدِرْ فَلَا أَقَلَّ مِنْ أَنْ تَشْكُرَه

> Extend your hand in recompensing the one who has done good to you, and if you are unable to do that then at least be grateful to him.[i]

Paying attention to this deep perspective when it comes to rectifying people's relationships and in addition, acting on this perspective, causes benevolence to spread and causes the performance of goodness in society. Some of these good deeds, though they may be few and small, bring about profound effects. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ آبَائِهِ ع أَنَّ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع صَاحَبَ رَجُلًا ذِمِّيّاً فَقَالَ لَهُ الذِّمِّيُّ أَيْنَ تُرِيدُ يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ أُرِيدُ الْكُوفَةَ فَلَمَّا عَدَلَ الطَّرِيقُ بِالذِّمِّيِّ عَدَلَ مَعَهُ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع فَقَالَ لَهُ الذِّمِّيُّ أَ لَسْتَ زَعَمْتَ أَنَّكَ تُرِيدُ الْكُوفَةَ فَقَالَ لَهُ بَلَى فَقَالَ لَهُ الذِّمِّيُّ فَقَدْ تَرَكْتَ الطَّرِيقَ فَقَالَ لَهُ قَدْ عَلِمْتُ قَالَ فَلِمَ عَدَلْتَ مَعِي وَ قَدْ عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع هَذَا مِنْ تَمَامِ حُسْنِ الصُّحْبَةِ أَنْ يُشَيِّعَ الرَّجُلُ صَاحِبَهُ هُنَيْئَةً إِذَا فَارَقَهُ وَ كَذَلِكَ أَمَرَنَا نَبِيُّنَا ص فَقَالَ لَهُ الذِّمِّيُّ هَكَذَا قَالَ قَالَ نَعَمْ قَالَ الذِّمِّيُّ لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّمَا تَبِعَهُ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لِأَفْعَالِهِ الْكَرِيمَةِ

i. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 385, no. 8778.

فَأَنَا أُشْهِدُكَ أَنِّي عَلَى دِينِكَ وَ رَجَعَ الذِّمِّيُّ مَعَ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع فَلَمَّا عَرَفَهُ أَسْلَمَ.

> Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) accompanied a *dhimmī* [along a path].[i] The *dhimmī* said, "Where are you going O servant of Allah?" The Imam replied, "I am going towards Kūfah." When the path of the *dhimmī* turned [and split away from the Imam's path], Amīr al-Mu'minīn also turned [and continued to accompany him]. The *dhimmī* asked, "Didn't you say you were going to Kūfah?" The Imam said, "Yes."
> "Then you have abandoned your path."
> "I know."
> "Why did you turn with me when you know that?"
> Amīr al-Mu'minīn said to him, "This is an example of the proper way to accompany someone, that at the time of parting with a person [he has travelled with], we should accompany them for a few more steps. This is how our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has instructed us." The *dhimmī* asked, "That is what he said?!" The Imam replied, "Yes." The *dhimmī* then said, "Undoubtedly whosoever followed him, did so because of his noble actions. Therefore, I bear witness that I am on your religion." The *dhimmī* returned with Amīr al-Mu'minīn and when he realized who he was, he accepted Islam.[ii]

Sometimes, some people are always seeking that others perform good deeds to them and show them goodness, but they themselves are not ready to do the slightest act of goodness to others! In such cases, one must act with prudence so that such people do not get habituated to laziness and so that they do not always have one-sided

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i. A *dhimmi* refers to a Christian or a Jew who lived under the protection of the Islamic state. (Ed.)

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 670.

expectations from others.

29

THE RIGHT OF THE MUA'DHDHIN

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُؤَذِّنِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ مُذَكِّرُكَ بِرَبِّكَ وَ دَاعِيكَ إِلَى حَظِّكَ وَ أَفْضَلُ أَعْوَانِكَ عَلَى قَضَاءِ الْفَرِيضَةِ الَّتِي افْتَرَضَهَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ فَتَشْكُرُهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ شُكْرَكَ لِلْمُحْسِنِ إِلَيْكَ وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ فِي بَيْتِكَ مُهْتَمّاً لِذَلِكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ لِلَّهِ فِي أَمْرِهِ مُتَّهِماً وَ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ لَا شَكَّ فِيهَا فَأَحْسِنْ صُحْبَةَ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the *mua'dhdhin* [the one who recites the *adhān*] is that you know that he makes you remember your Lord, calls you towards your fortune, and is your best helper in performing the obligatory action which Allah has made incumbent on you. So, thank him the way you would thank someone who does good to you. And even if you give importance to this matter in your own home [if you recite the *adhān* yourself], you must not be suspicious of him [with regards to the work he is doing] for Allah. And know that he is, without any doubt, a blessing of Allah for you. Therefore, you should accompany the blessing of Allah well, thanking Allah for it in all

situations. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE IMPORTANCE AND POSITION OF THE *ADHĀN* AND THE *MUA'DHDHIN*

One of the highly recommended actions of prayer is the *adhān*. In Islam, certain rights and characteristics have been mentioned regarding the *mua'dhdhin*. The *adhān* is recited to announce the arrival of the prayer time, a time when a person establishes a humble relationship with Allah. Hence, many virtues have been mentioned for reciting the *adhān* and *iqāmah* in the sayings of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them). For example, rows of angels will form behind the one who prays, if his prayer begins with the *adhān* and the *iqāmah*. Or for example, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

إنّ الشَّيطانَ إذا سَمِعَ النِّداءَ بالصَّلاةِ هَرَبَ

When Shayṭān hears the call to prayer, he runs away.[ii]

إنّ أهلَ السَّماءِ لا يَسْمَعُونَ مِن أهلِ الأرضِ شَيئا إلاّ الأذانَ

The only sound which the people of the heavens hear from the people of the world is the *adhān*.[iii]

The *adhān* includes a proclamation of Allah's greatness, a declaration of His absolute oneness, a testimony to the *nubuwwah* of the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), and a testimony to the imāmah and *wilāyah* of the *awliyā'* and successors of the Prophet. The *adhān* and *iqāmah* contain lofty meanings. It has been mentioned in a very profound narration that when Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) was in the masjid and heard the *adhān* from the *mua'dhdhin*, he began to cry. The people of

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 265.

ii. al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl*, no. 20951.

iii. al-Rayshahrī, *Mīzān al-ḥikmah*, vol. 1, p. 82, no. 441.

the masjid also started crying when they saw this state of the Imam.[i]

By reciting the *adhān* and *iqāmah*, a person acquires subtle levels of attention and a firm relationship with Allah. That is why we have been repeatedly advised to recite the *adhān* and *iqāmah*. This is to such an extent that some jurists have even said that if the prayer is recited without *adhān* and *iqāmah*, it is better to recite it again, so that the recitation of *adhān* and *iqāmah* is not treated with carelessness and indifference. This indicates the greatness of the *adhān* and *iqāmah*.

The *mua'dhdhin* has a distinguished status in an Islamic government and a portion of the public treasury is designated to him. This is because it is he who informs people of the time when a person has the honour to come before Allah. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَهُ مَدَّ بَصَرِهِ وَ مَدَّ صَوْتِهِ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَ يُصَدِّقُهُ كُلُّ رَطْبٍ وَ يَابِسٍ سَمِعَهُ وَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ مَنْ يُصَلِّي مَعَهُ فِي مَسْجِدِهِ سَهْمٌ وَ لَهُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَنْ يُصَلِّي بِصَوْتِهِ حَسَنَةٌ.

> Allah forgives the *mua'dhdhin* to the extent that his sight and his voice reaches in the sky, and everything fresh and withered that hears him attests to the truth of what he says, and for him is a portion in return for everyone who prays with him in his masjid, and a good deed is for him in return for every person who recited the prayer because of his voice.[ii]

Beings in existence join with the *mua'dhdhin* and attest to the truth of what he says, because as mentioned in the Noble Qur'ān, all beings remember Allah and glorify His holy essence.[iii] Because we are in this world and veils have been drawn over our ears and

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-tawḥīd*, p. 238.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-a'māl*, p. 32.

iii. Qur'ān 17:44

eyes, we do not comprehend this glorification. Of course, those who, through righteous actions and the purity of their inner selves, have cast aside the veils from the vision of their hearts, are capable of comprehending such realities. Therefore, all beings, by expressing the absolute greatness of the Lord, accompany and confirm the *mua'dhdhin*.

The responsibility of the *mua'dhdhin* is to announce the commencement of the prayer time so that believers leave aside their work and prepare for prayer. For this reason, a particular reward and status has been mentioned for him for this. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says:

وَ لَهُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَنْ يُصَلِّي بِأَذَانِهِ حَسَنَة

> And a good deed is [recorded] for the *mua'dhdhin* in return for everyone who recites the prayer because of his *adhān*.[1]

ATTRIBUTES OF THE *MUA'DHDHIN*

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says regarding the *mua'dhdhin* that he makes you remember the Lord and calls you towards your benefit and good fortune. This reminder creates a right for the *mua'dhdhin* on a person, such that he must be grateful and appreciate the *mua'dhdhin*.

During the five designated times for prayer, a person is in a particular state of Allah's remembrance. Even though a person can be in a state of Allah's remembrance during all his actions, prayers are still a specific type of focused remembrance of Allah. The *mua'dhdhin* is the one who reminds and calls towards this special act of remembrance. A person ought to be prepared for prayer from beforehand, so that he can empty himself from thoughts regarding his mundane activities and ready himself for acquiring presence of heart during prayer. Unto this end, the *adhān* itself is a preparation for a person so

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 5, p. 380, no. 8.

that by paying heed to its contents and teachings, he readies himself to meet with and be in the presence of Allah. For this reason, it has been highly advised that a person go to the masjid and wait there for the congregational prayers.

The *mua'dhdhin* calls a person to utilize the opportunity that has presented itself to him, because praying at the beginning of the prayer time is the best opportunity to pay attention to Allah, attain spiritual concentration, and seek His help. Thus, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that the *mua'dhdhin* is the best help for a person in performing that obligatory action which Allah has made incumbent on him. One should be careful and never look at the *mua'dhdhin* with a degrading look or consider him to be an annoyance.

Among the attributes of the *mua'dhdhin* is that he should have an eloquent Arabic accent, and a loud, beautiful voice that reaches far and wide. Also, he ought to be particular about the time and familiar with religious laws so that he recites the *adhān* on time, and so that the believers do not make mistakes regarding prayer timings.

THE NECESSITY AND MEANS OF THANKING THE *MUA'DHDHIN*

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says in continuation of this section that a person must be grateful to the *mua'dhdhin* who gives him such important news, just as he would show gratitude towards someone who does good to him. The greatest acts of good that one can perform for another person, are spiritual in nature. Such acts of good can never be recompensed.

Being grateful to the *mua'dhdhin* is realized when a believer responds to his call after hearing it, by leaving aside his class, work, or business, and setting out to pray. Indeed, studies, work, or business that is done at the time of prayer has no blessings in it. Ayatullah Mujtahidī (may Allah's mercy be upon him) used to say, "When I was in Qom and was studying the book Muṭawwal, [i] I found a very

i. Kitāb al-muṭawwal is an important book in Arabic eloquence and rhetoric,

proficient teacher who only had time to teach at noon. Some of my friends accepted this, but I didn't. Most of those who went to that class did not benefit from it." However, Ayatullah Mujtahidī himself acquired such blessings in his life and performed outstanding tasks that very few have accomplished the likes of. For over half a century, he strived in training seminary students.[i]

Therefore, we must be grateful to the *mua'dhdhin* who seeks to do good to us by leaving aside his work and reminding us that the prayer time has entered, regardless of the hot or cold weather. We must thank him and fulfil his rights. How true is the religion that motivates a *mua'dhdhin* to climb the minaret in chilling cold weather, to recite the *adhān*!

Ibn Sīnā, who is one of the outstanding philosophers of the Islamic world, had a student by the name of Bahmanyār. One day Bahmanyār said to his teacher, "With this outstanding intellect that you have, why don't you claim prophethood?" Ibn Sīnā did not answer him. After some time, on an extremely chilly winter night, he awoke Bahmanyār and asked him to fetch a glass of water. To avoid bringing water, Bahmanyār said, "Drinking cold water during such chilly weather inflicts a person with pneumonia and digestive illnesses." At that time, the sound of the *adhān* was heard. Ibn Sīnā made use of this opportunity and responded to his student's previous question as follows, "The one who claims prophethood should be somebody who, even after many centuries, inspires the *mua'dhdhin* to come to the minaret even in such intense cold weather! Not me whose private student gives excuses and is not ready to fetch some water for his teacher!"

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written by the eighth century scholar Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī. (Ed.)

i. The author of this book himself was one of the students of Ayatullah Mujtahidī (who passed away in the year 2008), as a young student in Tehran during the early 1970s. Refer to the section 'About the Author' in the beginning of this book. May Allah elevate the status of the teacher and preserve the student. (Ed.)

30

THE RIGHT OF THE IMAM OF CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ إِمَامِكَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ قَدْ تَقَلَّدَ السِّفَارَةَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَ الْوِفَادَةَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ وَ تَكَلَّمَ عَنْكَ وَ لَمْ تَتَكَلَّمْ عَنْهُ وَ دَعَا لَكَ وَ لَمْ تَدْعُ لَهُ وَ طَلَبَ فِيكَ وَ لَمْ تَطْلُبْ فِيهِ وَ كَفَاكَ هَمَّ الْمَقَامِ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَ الْمُسَاءَلَةِ لَهُ فِيكَ وَ لَمْ تَكْفِهِ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ كَانَ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ تَقْصِيرٌ كَانَ بِهِ دُونَكَ وَ إِنْ كَانَ آثِماً لَمْ تَكُنْ شَرِيكَهُ فِيهِ وَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ عَلَيْكَ فَضْلٌ فَوَقَى نَفْسَكَ بِنَفْسِهِ وَ وَقَى صَلَاتَكَ بِصَلَاتِهِ فَتَشْكُرَ لَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of your Imam [who leads you] in your prayers is that you know that he has taken up the work of being a mediator between you and Allah and being your delegate before your Lord. He speaks on your behalf, not you on his behalf. He supplicates for you, not you for him. He requests on your behalf, not you on his behalf. He has spared you the anxiety of standing before Allah and requesting something from Him, but you haven't done so for him. If there are any shortcomings in these

matters, [the responsibility of] it is on him and not on you. If he was sinful, you will not be his partner in this sin, and he has no excellence over you. Therefore, he has made himself a shield for you, and made his prayer a shield for your prayer, so thank him for that. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS AND THE STATION OF ITS IMAM

Congregational prayers has many virtues. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

وَ مَنْ مَشَى إِلَى مَسْجِدٍ يَطْلُبُ فِيهِ الْجَمَاعَةَ كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ خُطْوَةٍ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ حَسَنَةٍ وَ يُرْفَعُ لَهُ مِنَ الدَّرَجَاتِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ مَاتَ وَ هُوَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَكَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ يَعُودُونَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَ يُبَشِّرُونَهُ وَ يُؤْنِسُونَهُ فِي وَحْدَتِهِ وَ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لَهُ حَتَّى يُبْعَثَ

One who goes to the masjid for congregational prayers, for every step he takes he will have seventy thousand good deeds [written] and his station will be elevated to that same extent. If he dies in this state, Allah appoints seventy thousand angels to accompany him to his grave, give him glad tidings, be his close companions in his loneliness, and seek forgiveness for him till the Day of Judgment.[ii]

In congregational prayers, despite there being many people, a collective spiritual unity comes about which drives a person forward on the path towards Allah. Due to the importance of congregational prayers, it has been narrated from great personalities such as Imam Khumaynī (may Allah's mercy be upon him), that if one is compelled to choose between praying individually at the beginning of their time

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, pp. 265-266.

ii. al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. 8, p. 287, no. 7.

or praying in congregation later, then the congregational prayer is better. Such statements are also in line with some traditions.[i]

Various *waḍ'ī* rulings have also been mentioned regarding this act of worship.[ii] For example, the Imam of the congregation is considered the representative of the followers and hence, the recitation of Sūrat al-Ḥamd and the other *sūrah* is his responsibility, or certain rules such as dealing with doubts are his responsibility. For this reason, there are specific conditions for an Imam that must be ascertained by the ones who follow him.

Islam considers a congregation of people during prayer as being a collective soul with human sentiments. Islam also pays attention to subtle human relationships and wants people to become aware of

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i. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 308, no. 1-2.

عَنْ جَمِيلِ بْنِ صَالِحٍ أَنَّهُ سَأَلَ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع أَيُّهُمَا أَفْضَلُ يُصَلِّي الرَّجُلُ لِنَفْسِهِ فِي أَوَّلِ الْوَقْتِ أَوْ يُؤَخِّرُ قَلِيلًا وَ يُصَلِّي بِأَهْلِ مَسْجِدِهِ إِذَا كَانَ إِمَامَهُمْ قَالَ يُؤَخِّرُ وَ يُصَلِّي بِأَهْلِ مَسْجِدِهِ إِذَا كَانَ هُوَ الْإِمَامَ.

The narrator asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) which is better, that a person prays by himself at the beginning of the prayer time, or that he delays it a little and prays with the people of his masjid, if he is the Imam. The Imam said, "[It is better] that he delays and prays with the people of his masjid, if he is the Imam."

عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ عَنْ أَخِيهِ مُوسَى بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ ع قَالَ: سَأَلْتُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ يَتَحَدَّثُونَ حَتَّى يَذْهَبَ الثُّلُثُ الْأَوَّلُ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَ أَكْثَرُ أَيُّهُمَا أَفْضَلُ يُصَلُّونَ الْعِشَاءَ جَمَاعَةً أَوْ فِي غَيْرِ جَمَاعَةٍ قَالَ يُصَلُّونَهَا جَمَاعَةً أَفْضَلُ.

'Alī bin Ja'far asked his brother Imam al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) about a group of people who are busy talking until one-third of the night has passed, or even more. He asked the Imam, is it better that they pray *'ishā'* in congregation or not? The Imam said, "Congregation is better."

ii. *Waḍ'ī* (as opposed to *taklīfī*), indicates that these rulings pertain to the validity or the way the congregational prayer must be performed. For example, congregational prayer is such that the imam recites the *sūrah* and not the follower. Such rulings are not *taklīfī*, that is they are not saying such and such act is obligatory or forbidden. (Ed.)

each other's circumstances in these gatherings. Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) says:

إِنَّمَا جُعِلَتِ الْجَمَاعَةُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ الْإِخْلَاصُ وَ التَّوْحِيدُ وَ الْإِسْلَامُ وَ الْعِبَادَةُ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا ظَاهِراً مَكْشُوفاً مَشْهُوراً لِأَنَّ فِي إِظْهَارِهِ حُجَّةً عَلَى أَهْلِ الشَّرْقِ وَ الْغَرْبِ لِلَّهِ وَحْدَهُ... مَعَ مَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْمُسَاعَدَةِ عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَ التَّقْوَى وَ الزَّجْرِ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ مِنْ مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ.

Surely the congregation has only been legislated so that sincerity, monotheism (*tawḥīd*), Islam, and Allah's worship become apparent, exposed, and renowned. For verily, in it becoming apparent there is an argument from Allah for the people of the east and the west ... [this is] in addition to how it is an assistance in doing good deeds and piety, and a prevention of many sins against Allah, the Mighty and Exalted.[i]

Therefore, the Imam of the congregation must lead the group of believers towards Allah. The more he strives and works towards spiritual goals, the more he will succeed in acting on this responsibility. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

إِنَّ أَئِمَّتَكُمْ وَفْدُكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ فَانْظُرُوا مَنْ تُوفِدُونَ فِي دِينِكُمْ وَ صَلَوَاتِكُم

Verily, your leaders are your delegation [those who make you migrate] towards Allah, thus take care whom you delegate [and follow] in your religion and in your prayers.[ii]

In the continuation of this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 8, p. 287, no. 9.

ii. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 347, no. 4.

him) says that if the Imam of the congregation was sinful, then the followers shall not be his partner in this sin. Despite this, if one sees a sin from the Imam, then he cannot follow him. But regarding those sins that are between him and Allah, which others are unaware of, there is no responsibility on others. The responsibility is solely on the Imam himself.

THANKING THE IMAM OF THE CONGREGATION AND ITS METHOD

The method of showing gratefulness towards the Imam of the congregation is that a person should continuously strive to organize congregational prayers, preserve the respect of this Imam, learn the etiquettes of congregational prayers, and observe them. In addition, he should try to be more attentive to the members of the congregation and observe that which is necessitated by the congregation and being together.

31

THE RIGHT OF THE COMPANION WITH WHOM ONE SITS TOGETHER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْجَلِيسِ فَأَنْ تُلِينَ لَهُ كَنَفَكَ وَ تُطِيبَ لَهُ جَانِبَكَ وَ تُنْصِفَهُ فِي مُجَارَاةِ اللَّفْظِ وَ لَا تُغْرِقَ فِي نَزْعِ اللَّحْظِ إِذَا لَحَظْتَ وَ تَقْصِدَ فِي اللَّفْظِ إِلَى إِفْهَامِهِ إِذَا لَفَظْتَ وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ الْجَلِيسَ إِلَيْهِ كُنْتَ فِي الْقِيَامِ عَنْهُ بِالْخِيَارِ وَ إِنْ كَانَ الْجَالِسَ إِلَيْكَ كَانَ بِالْخِيَارِ وَ لَا تَقُومَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the companion with whom one sits together is that you are soft and pleasant with him, you are fair when engaging in conversation with him [meaning that you talk to him just as you would want him to talk to you], you do not all of a sudden turn your glance away from him, and that when you speak to him, you seek to make him understand by means of your speech. If you are the one who approached him, then you are free to stand up [and depart] from him, and if he is the one who approached you then he is free [to depart], but you should not stand up [to leave] without his permission. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 266.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SITTING TOGETHER (*MUJĀLASAH*) IN ISLAM

One of the rights pertaining to Allah's servitude is the right of the companion with whom one sits. The human was created such that—to organize the affairs in his life and fulfil various requirements—he needs material and emotional connections with other individuals. Thus, he forms close relationships with people, and in this regard, everybody will naturally have a closer relationship with some individuals as opposed to others. These close relationships are referred to as *mujālasah* in the words of the infallible and immaculate Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and a lot of importance has been given to this. Moreover, a person has various internal inclinations that can be satisfied through the correct type of *mujālasah*. For this reason, specific attributes have been mentioned regarding the companions one sits with. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

خَمْسُ خِصَالٍ مَنْ فَقَدَ مِنْهُنَّ وَاحِدَةً لَمْ يَزَلْ نَاقِصَ الْعَيْشِ زَائِلَ الْعَقْلِ مَشْغُولَ الْقَلْبِ فَأَوَّلُهَا صِحَّةُ الْبَدَنِ وَ الثَّانِيَةُ الْأَمْنُ وَ الثَّالِثَةُ السَّعَةُ فِي الرِّزْقِ وَ الرَّابِعَةُ الْأَنِيسُ الْمُوَافِقُ قُلْتُ وَ مَا الْأَنِيسُ الْمُوَافِقُ قَالَ الزَّوْجَةُ الصَّالِحَةُ وَ الْوَلَدُ الصَّالِحُ وَ الْخَلِيطُ الصَّالِحُ وَ الْخَامِسَةُ وَ هِيَ تَجْمَعُ هَذِهِ الْخِصَالَ الدَّعَةُ

"There are five traits that whoever is bereft of one of them, his life becomes defective, his intellect disappears, and his heart becomes occupied. The first is soundness of the body, the second is security, the third is abundance in sustenance, and the fourth is having an agreeable person to be intimate with." The narrator asked, "And who is an agreeable person one can be intimate with?" He said, "A righteous spouse, a righteous child, and a righteous companion. And as for the fifth, it encompasses all these traits, it is having tranquillity." [i]

i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 186, no. 5.

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) advised his children saying:

جَالِسُوا أَهْلَ الدِّينِ وَ الْمَعْرِفَةِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَالْوَحْدَةُ آنَسُ وَ أَسْلَمُ فَإِنْ أَبَيْتُمْ إِلَّا مُجَالَسَةَ النَّاسِ فَجَالِسُوا أَهْلَ الْمُرُوَّاتِ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْفُثُونَ فِي مَجَالِسِهِم

Sit with people of religion and knowledge. And if you are unable to [find such individuals] then loneliness is a better companion and safer [a person would remain sound by being lonely in this situation]. But if you cannot be without any companion, then sit with those who are chivalrous, because they will not behave obscenely in their gatherings. [i]

The people of religion are those who have correct beliefs and adhere to the primary rulings of religion. However, one cannot have high expectations in this regard because if he does, he will always remain alone. Moreover, he should not consider himself better than others. Hence, one must consider their own situation and characteristics, and then in accordance with that develop social intercourse and friendship.

ATTRIBUTES OF BAD COMPANIONS WITH WHOM ONE SITS

Companionship with some people has been reproached by the Imams (peace be upon them). Imam al-Bāqir narrates that his father Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon them) said to him:

يَا بُنَيَّ انْظُرْ خَمْسَةً فَلَا تُصَاحِبْهُمْ وَ لَا تُحَادِثْهُمْ وَ لَا تُرَافِقْهُمْ فِي طَرِيقٍ فَقُلْتُ يَا أَبَهْ مَنْ هُمْ قَالَ...

"O my dear child, consider [beware of] five groups of people. [If you come across them], do not be companions with them, do not talk with them, and do not accompany

i. Ibid., vol. 71, p. 196, no. 27.

them on their way." I said, "O my father! Who are they?" He replied...

1. Liars

...إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَاحَبَةَ الْكَذَّابِ فَإِنَّهُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ السَّرَابِ يُقَرِّبُ لَكَ الْبَعِيدَ وَ يُبَاعِدُ لَكَ الْقَرِيبَ...

...Refrain from being companions with a liar because he is like a mirage which makes things that are far appear near, and makes things that are close appear far away...

A mirage is such that it shows the shining image of water from far away, but when a person goes near to it, he finds that there is no water. Similarly, someone who always lies makes things that are far look near and makes things that are near look far away. He presents that which is contrary to reality. By being with him, others develop and grow in the opposite direction of the truth.

2. Evildoers

...وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَاحَبَةَ الْفَاسِقِ فَإِنَّهُ بَائِعُكَ بِأُكْلَةٍ أَوْ أَقَلَّ مِنْ ذَلِكَ...

...and refrain from being companions with someone who is sinful [and who does not fear performing despicable actions] because he will sell you for a morsel or for even less than that...

A sinful person would be ready to sacrifice their companion to attain their evil desires and immoral goals. In addition, they cause others to also fall into impurity.

3. Stingy Individuals

...وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَاحَبَةَ الْبَخِيلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَخْذُلُكَ فِي مَالِهِ أَحْوَجَ مَا تَكُونُ إِلَيْهِ...

...and refrain from being companions with a stingy person because he will abandon you when you need his wealth...

Someone who is stingy cannot bear to see you acquire wealth through the right means, or to see you spend it in the right and necessary path. He will put you in a tight spot. A stingy person who is not ready to abandon his stinginess will abandon you regarding that which you need.

4. Fools

...وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَاحَبَةَ الْأَحْمَقِ فَإِنَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْفَعَكَ فَيَضُرُّكَ...

...and refrain from being companions with a fool because he intends to benefit you but instead causes you harm...

A fool who does not understand does not open his eyes to see what the reality is and what is beneficial for him. He speaks without thinking, presents plans, guides others, and wants to benefit them but ends up harming them. This type of ignorance can also be found in academic matters! A person may have memorized some terminology, but still be unable to understand and comprehend what the benefit and purpose of that terminology is. Foolish individuals can be found in all affairs of life; they seek to benefit others but end up harming them.

5. Those Who Sever Bonds with Relatives

...وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَاحَبَةَ الْقَاطِعِ لِرَحِمِهِ فَإِنِّي وَجَدْتُهُ مَلْعُوناً فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ فِي ثَلَاثَةِ مَوَاضِعَ

...and refrain from being companions with someone who severs his bonds with his relatives for verily I found him to be cursed in the Book of Allah (the Invincible and Majestic) in three places.[i]

One who cuts off his relationship with his own relatives will

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 376, no. 7.

certainly cut off relations with a friend—who doesn't even have a blood relation with him—under the slightest pretext. Some people are very short-sighted in social relationships, they always expect others to display good behaviour to them, but they do not think about how they themselves behave with others! They do not consider others and see what position they have, rather they look at everyone in the same manner. This is an example of short-sightedness. Usually, bonds of kinship are severed due to such inappropriate expectations. If such thinking exists in one's companion and friend, then one must admonish them. If they persist on this view, then it is necessary to distance oneself from them because such a person is cursed according to the Qur'ān.[i]

Other attributes of bad companions are as follows:

6. Those Who Insult the Imam or the Believers

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يَقْعُدَنَّ فِي مَجْلِسٍ يُعَابُ فِيهِ إِمَامٌ أَوْ يُنْتَقَصُ فِيهِ مُؤْمِن

> One who believes in Allah and the hereafter will never sit in a gathering in which the Imam is blamed, or the defects of a believer are revealed.[ii]

However, this applies to the situation where one cannot support the Imam or the believer in that gathering. If he can support them and positively influence the thinking of those in the gathering, then there is no problem. Nonetheless, he must be careful to not be a partner with the others in making it seem as though the believers or the Imam of the Muslims are at fault.

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i. Qur'ān 47:23, 13:25, and 2:27.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 378, no. 11.

7. The Dishonourable

One must refrain from being companions with those who consider their lofty human identity as being small and inferior, who indulge in vile actions, who do not want to possess a human identity and perform actions worthy of that human identity. Being the companion of such people causes a believer's heart to die and makes him slowly take on their traits. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said to Dāwūd al-Raqqī:

انْظُرْ إِلَى كُلِّ مَنْ لَا يُفِيدُكَ مَنْفَعَةً فِي دِينِكَ فَلَا تَعْتَدَّنَّ بِهِ وَ لَا تَرْغَبَنَّ فِي صُحْبَتِهِ فَإِنَّ كُلَّ مَا سِوَى اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى مُضْمَحِلٌّ وَخِيمٌ عَاقِبَتُه

> Be mindful of whoever is not beneficial for your religion! Do not pay any attention to such a person and do not be inclined towards their company for verily everything that is not Allah is non-existent and meets a bad end.[i]

8. The Wealthy

The Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said,

أَرْبَعٌ يُمِتْنَ الْقَلْبَ ... وَ مُجَالَسَةُ الْمَوْتَى فَقِيلَ لَهُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَ مَا الْمَوْتَى قَالَ كُلُّ غَنِيٍّ مُتْرَف

> "Four things cause the death of the heart ... [and the fourth is] being companions with the dead ones." He was asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Who are the dead ones?" He said, "Every wealthy and affluent individual [whose wealth makes him fall into rebellion]."[ii]

Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) said to someone:

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 191, no. 5.

ii. Ibid., vol. 71, pp. 194-195, no. 22.

لَا تُجَالِسِ الْأَغْنِيَاءَ فَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ يُجَالِسُهُمْ وَ هُوَ يَرَى أَنَّ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَةً فَمَا يَقُومُ حَتَّى يَرَى أَنْ لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَة

> Do not be companions with the wealthy because a servant enters into their companionship believing that Allah has granted him a blessing, but he does not leave their companionship until he believes that Allah has not granted him any blessing.[i]

What is intended by the wealthy are those who always pay attention to their affluence, their money, and their position. Those who rely on these matters. Not those wealthy individuals who do not consider themselves as having any special position, who consider their wealth as being from Allah, who acquire their wealth in a lawful manner and make it reach the deserving ones on the path of truth. Such individuals are in the category of Prophet Sulaymān (peace be upon him) and are his followers.

9. Those Who Innovate in the Religion

Innovation (*bidʿah*) is when one ascribes words or actions to the religion that have not been mentioned by it. Or it can be when one negates that which has undoubtedly been mentioned in the religion, saying that such a thing is not there. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) denounced the innovators and said the following:

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمْ أَهْلَ الرَّيْبِ وَ الْبِدَعِ مِنْ بَعْدِي فَأَظْهِرُوا الْبَرَاءَةَ مِنْهُمْ وَ أَكْثِرُوا مِنْ سَبِّهِمْ وَ الْقَوْلِ فِيهِمْ وَ الْوَقِيعَةِ وَ بَاهِتُوهُمْ كَيْلَا يَطْمَعُوا فِي الْفَسَادِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ وَ يَحْذَرَهُمُ النَّاسُ وَ لَا يَتَعَلَّمُوا مِنْ بِدَعِهِمْ يَكْتُبِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ بِذَلِكَ الْحَسَنَاتِ وَ يَرْفَعْ لَكُمْ بِهِ الدَّرَجَاتِ فِي الْآخِرَة

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i. Ibid., vol. 71, p. 194, no. 21.

> When you see people of doubt and innovation after me, make apparent your distancing from them, use abusive language regarding them abundantly, repeatedly mention their problems and defects, and overwhelm them [in debate] so that they are not tempted to create discord in Islam. People should be wary of them so that they do not learn their innovations. [If you do so], Allah will write for you good deeds and elevate your levels in the hereafter.[i]

10. Companionship with Women

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

> وَ إِنَّ النِّسَاءَ هَمُّهُنَّ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
>
> And indeed, the aspiration of [many] women is the adornments of the life of this world.[ii]

As a result, excessive companionship with such women can increase a person's inclination towards worldliness and seeking luxury and make him oblivious of Allah and the hereafter.

11. People of Desires

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

> وَ مُجَالَسَةَ أَهْلِ الْهَوَى مَنْسَاةٌ لِلْإِيمَانِ وَ مَحْضَرَةٌ لِلشَّيْطَانِ
>
> Keeping the company of those who follow their desires causes faith to be forgotten and Shayṭān to appear.[iii]

This is because one who worships his desires has made other than Allah his deity. Moreover, he encourages others to do the same, making them worship their desires as well.

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i. Ibid., vol. 71, p. 202, no. 41.

ii. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 153.

iii. Ibid., sermon no. 86.

A PERSON'S RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING COMPANIONSHIP WITH BAD PEOPLE

Companionship has a deep effect on one's spirit. Some people have both good qualities as well as bad ones. If by means of companionship, a person can help them get rid of their bad qualities, then being companions with them is desirable. However, if he cannot do that, then he ought to protect himself and refrain from being companions with such people. Sometimes, some of these relationships are necessary and a person has no choice but to maintain them. In such situations he must restrict such relationships to the minimum amount necessary. For example, it is possible a person's spouse has some bad qualities in them. After all, one is not aware of the inner reality of others when they marry. In such a situation, he should try to guide and give good advice to his spouse. This should always be the case in marriage, both parties should guide and give good advice to the other, for none of them are infallible. However, if his spouse does not abandon their bad quality despite continuous guidance, then he should leave them alone in this regard, and continue with his own affairs.

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says the following regarding the importance of companionship:

مُجَالَسَةُ الْأَشْرَارِ تُورِثُ سُوءَ الظَّنِّ بِالْأَخْيَارِ وَ مُجَالَسَةُ الْأَخْيَارِ تُلْحِقُ الْأَشْرَارَ بِالْأَخْيَارِ وَ مُجَالَسَةُ الْفُجَّارِ لِلْأَبْرَارِ تُلْحِقُ الْفُجَّارَ بِالْأَبْرَارِ

> Companionship with evil people brings about suspicion towards those who are good, and companionship with good people makes those who are evil join the good ones. And the companionship of evildoers with righteous people makes the evildoers join the righteous ones.[i]

A wicked person tries to spread evil through different means. If

i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 16, p. 265, no. 18.

he is unable to change another person's actions through his bitter words, then he tries to influence their mind. One who associates with such a person whose actions and attributes are undesirable, is slowly influenced. Their mind and actions change, and they become pessimistic about good people. Nothing remains for such a person who is suspicious and has a bad opinion about people of good conduct! This is because the delight of a person's heart in society is when he likes good people, when he knows good people, and when he associates with them. But if no good person remains in his eyes, then what remains for him?!

The importance of this matter is to such an extent that if we are in doubt with regards to whether an individual is good or bad, we have been commanded to look at his friends. With whom is it that he associates? If his friends are people of Allah's religion, then that person himself is a a person of religion. But if they are not, then he has nothing to do with religion!

THE RIGHTS OF GOOD COMPANIONS

A narrator recounted that we were with Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) and the house was full of people. The Imam said:

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحْسِنْ صُحْبَةَ مَنْ صَحِبَه

> Verily, he is not from amongst us, one who does not associate in a good way with his companion.[i]

When a person finds an appropriate companion, it is necessary for him to fulfil certain rights of his. For example, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that a person should behave with such a companion with softness and kindness. He should not behave harshly, rather he should be humble when interacting with him and not have a sense of being greater than him. One who is not humble will never be influenced, they will never benefit in the least from the goodness of their companion. Even if they were companions of the

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 161, no. 21.

Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and the infallible Imam, they would not benefit due to their arrogance.

In addition, one must speak in a good manner with such a companion. He must weigh his words before speaking so that he does not say something spontaneously that hurts their feelings. Of course, one should joke with his companions, but the manner of joking should not be such that it belittles that person in front of others. Also, when he looks at his companion, he should not stare too much. His glance should be accompanied with tenderness, and when they converse with each other, he should try to make his words understood. He should refrain from saying things that are not understandable and from confusing his companion.

It is also understood from the traditions that a person must act in the following way with a good companion: he should remember their good actions and not be such that when they perform a good deed, he forgets it and only reminds them of their mistakes. On the contrary, if his companion errs, one should forget it right away and bury the matter in that very place. It should not be the case that one constantly recalls that mistake and reminds his companion of it. Of course, with the intention of helping them rectify their behaviour, one can mention it in a soft tone, presenting it to him as a gift.[i] But this should not be such that he belittles them because of this mistake. Doing so is a trait of one whose soul is deficient.

Some people, like a fly, always sit on the defects and vices of others. They rarely land on their goodness, even though we have been commanded to remember the goodness of others. We must beware that when a relationship turns sour, the goodness of others is not forgotten and we do not say, "No goodness has ever reached me from you!" This is ingratitude because of which Allah discontinues his goodness.

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i. Apparently, reference to narrations such as the following: al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 639, no. 5. (Ed.)

أَحَبُّ إِخْوَانِي إِلَيَّ مَنْ أَهْدَى إِلَيَّ عُيُوبِي

The best of my friends is he who gifts me my defects.

One who acts like this with the servants of Allah will behave in the same manner with Allah.

ATTRIBUTES OF WORTHY COMPANIONS

1. Scholars

Among those with whom one should have a close and intimate relationship are the scholars and the learned. Luqmān (peace be upon him) says:

يا بُنَيَّ ، جالِسِ العُلَماءَ ، وزاحِمهُم بِرُكبَتَيكَ فَإنَّ اللّهَ عَزَّ وجَلَّ يُحيِي القُلوبَ بِنورِ الحِكمَةِ كَما يُحيِي الأَرضَ بِوابِلِ السَّماءِ

My son! Be companions with the scholars and trouble them with your knees [humbly sit before them], for verily Allah (the Invincible and the Majestic) enlivens hearts through the light of wisdom just like He enlivens the earth through the heavy downpour [of water] from the sky.[i]

In many sayings, a person has been enjoined to be the companion of and establish a relationship with scholars who possess the following qualities. Firstly, they have an awareness regarding the realities of the world and the religion, secondly, they know the way to attain perfection and the human's true goal, and thirdly, they abide by that which this knowledge necessitates.

The Messenger of Allah says:

لَا تَجْلِسُوا إِلَّا عِنْدَ كُلِّ عَالِمٍ يَدْعُوكُمْ مِنْ خَمْسٍ إِلَى خَمْسٍ مِنَ الشَّكِّ إِلَى الْيَقِينِ وَ مِنَ الرِّيَاءِ إِلَى الْإِخْلَاصِ وَ مِنَ الرَّغْبَةِ إِلَى الزَّهْبَةِ وَ مِنَ الْكِبْرِ إِلَى التَّوَاضُعِ وَ مِنَ الْغِشِّ إِلَى النَّصِيحَة

Do not sit in the company of a scholar except if he invites

i. al-Rayshahrī, *Mīzān al-ḥikmah*, vol. 2, p. 528, no. 2406.

you [away] from five things, towards five things: from doubt towards certainty, from ostentation towards sincerity, from inclination [towards the world and Allah's disobedience] towards fear [of Allah and the Day of Resurrection], from pride towards humility, and from deceit and deception towards counsel and concern. [i]

2. The Poor

In Islamic teachings it has been advised that one should have relationships with the weak and the destitute of society so that he is admonished by looking at them. Regarding this matter, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

تَمَسْكَنُوا وَ أَحِبُّوا الْمَسَاكِينَ وَ جَالِسُوهُمْ وَ أَعِينُوهُم

Have the state of being poor, love those who are poor, be companions with them, and help them. [ii]

In this saying, the Prophet is indicating this point that if you have the financial ability, then help them financially. But if you do not have the financial ability, then by developing a relationship with them, when they perceive that you comprehend their situation of poverty, this itself is a psychological help for them which is even greater than material help.

3. Being Companions with the Following Three Groups

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said that the disciples (*ḥawāriyyūn*) asked Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be upon him):

فَمَنْ نُجَالِسُ إِذاً قَالَ مَنْ يُذَكِّرُكُمُ اللَّهَ رُؤْيَتُهُ وَ يَزِيدُ فِي عِلْمِكُمْ مَنْطِقُهُ وَ يُرَغِّبُكُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَمَلُه

"Then who should we be companions with?" He said, "With someone who when you look at him it reminds

i. al-Daylamī, *Aʿlām al-dīn fī ṣifāt al-muʾminīn*, p. 272.

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmūʿah warrām*, vol. 2, p. 120.

> you of Allah, someone whose speech increases your knowledge, and whose actions encourage you towards the hereafter."[i]

Someone who looking at him makes a person remember Allah must himself be someone who remembers Allah. His speech and actions must have become Divine, and he must be someone associated with religious knowledge and teachings. His mind and intellect must have been formed under the guidance of such knowledge such that his speech increases your knowledge. If this is not the case, then his words would be futile and vain, and they would only waste the time of others.

Another quality mentioned above is that the actions of a person's companion should encourage him towards the hereafter and free him from inclining towards this world and being infatuated with it. The human is naturally attracted to the world. Thus, if he goes after those who have religious knowledge but whose actions are inclined towards the world, then he will also be influenced by the worldliness of such people. The daily pursuit of such people is to acquire worldly gains such as position and wealth, whilst luminous knowledge and teachings have no place in their heart.

ALLAH AND THE AHL AL-BAYT (PEACE BE UPON THEM): THE BEST COMPANIONS

The first and the foremost companion who is always with us, in solitude and in public, is Allah the Exalted. He Himself has said:

أَنَا جَلِيسُ مَنْ ذَكَرَنِي

I am the companion of someone who remembers Me.[ii]

At the next level, the *awliyā'* of Allah—that is the prophets, the Noble Prophet of Islam, and the infallible Imams (peace be upon them)—are the best companions for a person, both in this world and

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 44.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 496, no. 4.

in the hereafter. However, it is clear that physical companionship is not intended here but rather, what is meant is a spiritual companionship. A person should consider who it is that he is connected to and at harmony with. What kind of lifestyle and manner of thinking is he in line with? It is possible that a person does not outwardly see the Imam of his time during his life, but he has a spiritual relationship with that Imam and does not abandon this bond. In such a situation, the Imam shall in turn support him and come to his aid during sensitive circumstances.

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THE RIGHT OF THE NEIGHBOUR

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْجَارِ فَحِفْظُهُ غَائِباً وَ كَرَامَتُهُ شَاهِداً وَ نُصْرَتُهُ وَ مَعُونَتُهُ فِي الْحَالَيْنِ جَمِيعاً لَا تَتَّبِعْ لَهُ عَوْرَةً وَ لَا تَبْحَثْ لَهُ عَنْ سَوْءَةٍ لِتَعْرِفَهَا فَإِنْ عَرَفْتَهَا مِنْهُ عَنْ غَيْرِ إِرَادَةٍ مِنْكَ وَ لَا تَكَلُّفٍ كُنْتَ لِمَا عَلِمْتَ حِصْناً حَصِيناً وَ سِتْراً سَتِيراً لَوْ بَحَثْتَ الْأَسِنَّةُ عَنْهُ ضَمِيراً لَمْ تَتَّصِلْ إِلَيْهِ لِانْطِوَائِهِ عَلَيْهِ لَا تَسْتَمِعْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُ لَا تُسْلِمْهُ عِنْدَ شَدِيدَةٍ وَ لَا تَحْسُدْهُ عِنْدَ نِعْمَةٍ تُقِيلُ عَثْرَتَهُ وَ تَغْفِرُ زَلَّتَهُ وَ لَا تَدَّخِرْ حِلْمَكَ عَنْهُ إِذَا جَهِلَ عَلَيْكَ وَ لَا تَخْرُجْ أَنْ تَكُونَ سِلْماً لَهُ تَرُدُّ عَنْهُ لِسَانَ الشَّتِيمَةِ وَ تُبْطِلُ فِيهِ كَيْدَ حَامِلِ النَّصِيحَةِ وَ تُعَاشِرُهُ مُعَاشَرَةً كَرِيمَةً وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the neighbour is that in his absence you protect him, in his presence you respect him, and in both situations, you assist and help him. You must not pursue his faults nor seek to find his defects so that you become aware of them. However, if you become aware of them incidentally, without wanting to or exerting yourself to, then you must be like a firm fort and a thick curtain that

protects what you came to know. So much so that even if spears split open your insides in search of it, they would not reach it due to how concealed it is. Do not listen to his words secretly [or do not accept what other people say about him],[i] from where he does not know. Do not abandon him during difficulty and hardship, do not envy him for any blessing, forgive his lapses, and overlook his mistakes. If he behaves ignorantly with you, don't withhold your forbearance from him. Do not end your peaceful coexistence with him, responding to those who use abusive language and nullifying the deceit of an apparent advisor. Associate with him graciously, and there is no strength except with Allah.[ii]

THE IMPORTANCE OF PAYING ATTENTION TO NEIGHBOURS

One of the rights of Allah's servitude that is manifested in a person's social relationships is the right of the neighbour. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

حَرِيمُ الْمَسْجِدِ أَرْبَعُونَ ذِرَاعاً وَ الْجِوَارُ أَرْبَعُونَ دَاراً مِنْ أَرْبَعَةِ جَوَانِبِهَا

The sanctuary of a masjid is forty cubits (*dhirāʾ*), and the neighbourhood is forty houses in four directions.[iii]

After commanding the human to worship Him and prohibiting him from ascribing partners to Him, Allah says:

وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ

And be good to the parents, the relatives, the orphans,

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i. The Arabic phrase, *lā tastamiʿ ʿalayh*, may be translated in both ways. (Ed.)

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 266.

iii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 151, no. 6.

the needy, the near neighbour and the distant neighbour. (4:36)

This blessed verse indicates the importance of such social relationships. Every social relationship plays a particular role in advancing a person's spirit and his spiritual affairs. The Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says the following in this regard:

حُرْمَةُ الْجَارِ عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ كَحُرْمَةِ أُمِّه

The respect of the neighbour is like the sanctity and respect of a person's mother.[i]

This expression with regards to a person's relationship with his mother is a very subtle expression. A person is raised in the lap of his mother and this relationship between a mother and child has a special influence on the development of the child's sentiments, feelings, as well as his intellectual and religious dimensions. Keeping in mind the sanctity that exists between a mother and her child, the Prophet says that one ought to also have such a relationship with their neighbour. Observing the rights specific to this relationship has been given so much attention that at the time of his death, Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) enjoined his children thus:

وَ اللَّهَ اللَّهَ فِي جِيرَانِكُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ وَصِيَّةُ نَبِيِّكُمْ مَا زَالَ يُوصِي بِهِمْ حَتَّى ظَنَنَّا أَنَّهُ سَيُوَرِّثُهُم

Allah Allah with regards to your neighbours! For verily they were the subject of the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) advice. He went on advising in their favour till we thought he would designate for them a share in the inheritance.[ii]

This means that observing the rights of the neighbour is, in reality,

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i. al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, p. 126.

ii. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, letter no. 47.

the observance of Divine responsibilities. The same way a person has a close relationship with his inheritors who are the foremost among his relatives, he should also develop such a relationship with his neighbours. For this reason, in a very important supplication for neighbours, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) mentions the responsibilities of every individual concerning his neighbours.[i]

THE MOST IMPORTANT EFFECT OF BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says the following regarding the worldly effects of being a good neighbour:

حُسْنُ الْجِوَارِ يَعْمُرُ الدِّيَارَ وَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْأَعْمَار

Being a good neighbour causes houses [cities] to flourish and a person's lifespan to increase.[ii]

It is befitting that a person be a good neighbour for others, not just that he seeks to have good neighbours. Being a good neighbour causes cities to prosper, and because of it, a person's relationship with those around him also becomes good. He becomes aware of their circumstances and tends to their apparent needs. When a person's human and emotional relationships are secured, it causes him to positively benefit from his life. This is because relationships amongst men are not like their relationships with animals, plants, or inanimate objects! Rather, due to the various faculties and inclinations within a person, his relationships also have different dimensions. These relationships are intellectual, emotional, sentimental, and so on. If a person's emotional needs are appropriately fulfilled in his social relationships, then the many annoyances, stresses, and other types of disagreeable behaviour—that exist in life these days—will not come about or will be few and insignificant. These days many

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i. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), *Al-ṣaḥīfah al-sajjādiyyah*, supplication no. 26.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 667, no. 8.

deaths are caused by psychological pressures. Science has proven that psychological distress can even influence the regulation of blood pressure and the relations among nerve cells and capillaries in the human brain. Such experimental knowledge is beneficial for us as it clarifies some of the outward wisdom behind such responsibilities.

The human innately seeks tranquillity in his life and seeks to live with hope. Having a good relationship with his neighbours makes the human hopeful towards life and makes him acquire a level of tranquillity. This hope in turn, positively influences the development of other aspects of his existence. It is for this reason that the Infallibles (peace be upon them) said that being a good neighbour causes an increase in the human's lifespan. On the contrary, when one does not have a good relationship with his neighbours, if he can neither tolerate these disagreeable relationships nor can he move away from them, he will have to deal with certain disagreeable consequences.

THE PRIMARY RIGHTS OF THE NEIGHBOUR

The rights concerning neighbours have various dimensions. Some of these rights pertain to the *sharī'ah* and the human's practical responsibilities, while others are *akhlāqī* responsibilities. The human develops and inclines towards righteousness or evil because of these relationships and having such relationships is unavoidable. For this reason, the luminous commandments of the *sharī'ah*, conveyed to us to regulate these relationships, are the only solution that build the human and strengthen him on the path of Allah's servitude.

Some of the of the most important of these rights are indicated below.

1. Not Causing Trouble

Imam al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) says:

لَيْسَ حُسْنُ الْجِوَارِ كَفَّ الْأَذَى وَ لَكِنَّ حُسْنَ الْجِوَارِ الصَّبْرُ عَلَى الْأَذَى

> Being a good neighbour is not just refraining from troubling [one's neighbours], rather being a good neighbour is to patiently bear [their] trouble.[i]

Trouble and harassment have various aspects to them. They rob the human of tranquillity, regardless of whether it be harassment in financial matters or matters related to the human's dignity and status, and regardless of whether it pertains to the human himself or his spouse and children.

2. Protection in Their Absence

As Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) said, if the human's neighbours are not present, he ought to protect them. This could apply when they are travelling or if their guardian has passed away. Protection includes protecting their house from theft and other incidents, and also includes being careful that their dignity is protected. The human should refrain from doing something that degrades their neighbour; he should defend their prestige as much as possible.

3. Honouring Them in Their Presence

When interacting with his neighbours, the human must behave in such a way that his neighbour's honour and prestige is preserved, be it his honour as a human being or his honour as a believer. No disrespect should be shown to him. The human should assist him as much as possible by material assistance, kind words, and even emotional or spiritual help.

4. Not Disclosing Their Defects

If the human sees a defect in his neighbour, he must not disclose it to anyone except in those exceptional situations in which backbiting is permissible. For example, if someone wants to marry their daughter into the house of this neighbour, if someone wants to marry the daughter of this neighbour, or if someone wants to perform a

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 409.

transaction with them which will not be in their best interests. In these situations, one must inform the individual of this neighbour's defect, but only that defect that concerns the matter at hand, nothing else. Concealing defects is one of the important responsibilities in human relationships, especially with respect to certain categories of people such as neighbours.

5. Not Seeking to Discover Their Wrongdoing

Among the other rights of the neighbour is that one should not seek to discover his defects and wrongdoing. Some people are always curious to know where people go or what they do. They seek to find defects in others and remember them so that when an opportunity presents itself, they can mention it to him or to others. If a person is like this then, according to the sayings of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them), Allah will disgrace him in the solitude of his house. This means that Allah does something due to which others seek to find the defects and wrongdoing of such a person, and in this way, he is disgraced.

In the human's relationships with other people and with his neighbours, at times he suddenly and unintentionally sees or hears something. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that when you come across the defects of others, especially the defects of your neighbour, you must be like a firm fort and a covering curtain with respect to that which you have become aware of. So much so that if difficulties fall upon you, to the extent that spears want to split open what is in your chest and bring it out, they should not be able to reveal that defect of your neighbour.

However, this does not mean that when a person sees a defect of a believer, he should not speak of it in appropriate manner. He should not abandon enjoining good, forbidding evil, and guiding others to the right way. It is necessary that firstly, this defect doesn't spread, and secondly, that person reforms himself.

6. Refraining from Spying

In continuation, Imam says that if one's neighbours are speaking among themselves, in their own house and unaware of others, he should not listen to what is going on between them to acquire news and information about their internal affairs. This is one of the reprehensible instances of spying. However, there are some exceptional instances here. For example, if one determines that his neighbour is plotting to destroy the society or the Islamic government, then in such cases, a person's responsibility is different. In such a situation it is necessary to first advise them, then sternly warn them, and finally, it is necessary to report them to the society or the government. This is because, as per the view of the religion of Islam, individual interests only possess importance as long as they do not harm the interests of society and government.

7. Not Abandoning Them in Difficulties

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if your neighbour is going through difficulty, you must not leave him alone in his situation. Rather, his difficulty must be resolved by any means necessary. Sometimes a person is an honourable neighbour and does not want his difficulty to be revealed. In this case, you should indirectly help him resolve his difficulty. Make the tools for this available for him in such a way that he doesn't realize you have directly resolved his difficulty.

As people have different personalities, it is necessary to interact with them according to their respective condition. Some families may not mind receiving direct help. However, other families are honourable, and even though they do not outwardly appear to take issue when their situation is investigated, inwardly they are offended. For this reason, whenever necessary, one should investigate so that the extent of poverty and need is determined or so that the need may be fulfilled through some other way.

8. Staying Away from Envy

Envy in individual or social relationships is one of the human traits that has the potential to destroy. When someone attains a material or spiritual blessing, a narrow-minded person cannot bear to see him receive that blessing. If the narrow-minded person does not control this bad trait in himself, then apart from destroying himself, he may destroy the other person as well, or his blessing. This is one of the greater sins. Envy with respect to some individuals is more destructive than with respect to others. Such is the case with neighbours, who live in a person's vicinity, with whom he is constantly in contact, and whom he always sees.

It is narrated there was once a person in Baghdad who had a righteous neighbour. Other people were in contact with that righteous neighbour of his, but out of envy, he could not bear to see these good relationships of the people with his neighbour. The fire of envy was inflamed within him, and he could not tolerate it. He was ready to give his own life rather than see that person's honour! Eventually, he told his slave, "Whatever I command you, you must obey! Take this knife and kill me at midnight on top of the neighbour's roof. Also take this money and run away from the city." Due to the threats and insistence of his master, the slave obeyed the command. He cut off his master's head and threw it on the roof of the neighbour and escaped. After a few days, the people realized that this man had been killed and they found his head on the roof of that righteous neighbour. By the order of the ruler, the righteous man was arrested and taken to the gallows to take revenge on him (*qisās*). But the conscience of the killer was not at ease and eventually he came forward and introduced himself. He said, "I cut off his head because of his insistence. That righteous individual is innocent." In the end, the man was acquitted and his position among the people remained intact.[i]

Envy is not a trait of the soul from the onset. In the first stage, it is a satanic insinuation in the mind. However, if a person gives it

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol 70, p. 259.

importance and if it settles in his heart, satanic plots also follow. It transforms into thoughts and planning, and over time it develops into a wicked trait of the soul. Therefore, the Imam (peace be upon him) says that if you see a blessing in someone, consider that blessing as being his. Strive and supplicate for that blessing to grow, and know that undoubtedly, if Allah wants, He will grant this blessing to you too.

9. Forgiving Their Mistakes and Lapses

When it comes to social relationships, most people transgress the rights of others, especially their neighbours. They do not fulfil these rights, either due to negligence, ignorance, or due to the rebellion of their soul's desires. If one has a personality of seeking revenge or not forgiving, then he shall always be in spiritual and psychological distress or material and social difficulties. Therefore, acquiring the attribute of forgiveness has been extremely emphasized in the verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations.[i] Forgiveness is one of the perfect attributes of Allah, and it brings about good effects in this world and the hereafter, especially with respect to one's family and neighbours with whom a person has a close relationship.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

> عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْعَفْوِ فَإِنَّ الْعَفْوَ لَا يَزِيدُ الْعَبْدَ إِلَّا عِزًّا
>
> It is upon you to forgive because forgiveness does not increase for the servant except in honour.[ii]

> تَجَاوَزُوا عَنْ عَثَرَاتِ الْخَاطِئِينَ يقيكم اللَّهُ بِذَلِكَ سُوءَ الْأَقْدَارِ
>
> Overlook the lapses of those who make errors so that Allah protects you from bad happenings.[iii]

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i. Qur'ān 4:43, 4:99, and 4:149.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 108, no. 5.

iii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 2, p. 120.

مَن عَفا عِندَ القُدرَةِ عَفا اللّهُ عَنهُ يَومَ العُسرَةِ

If a person forgives when he has the power [to take revenge], Allah will forgive him on the difficult day [the time of death or the Day of Judgment].[i]

10. Showing Forbearance

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that in an appropriate relationship with a neighbour, you should not only overlook his lapses but also try to show forbearance in the face of his ignorant behaviour. Do not react quickly to him, so that when faced with such behaviour he may be influenced and comprehend his own mistake. For the states and attributes of a person to be rectified, Islam has not made it a condition that you should only display good attributes when others also manifest them. Rather, Islam emphasizes that even if others do not possess good attributes, then you should still manifest these attributes within yourself. In this way you will show that you have acquired attributes of perfection and their effects, and moreover, you may also have a positive influence on others.

The attribute of forbearance is one of the perfect attributes of Allah.[ii] There is abundant emphasis on acquiring the attribute of forbearance, to such an extent that Allah reveres Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) due to this attribute:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُّنِيبٌ

Abraham was indeed most forbearing, plaintive, [and] penitent. (11:75)

Most human beings are susceptible to making mistakes, displaying ignorance regarding the position of others, and not preserving their status and honour. For this reason, showing forbearance is necessary for the soundness of relationships. The importance of this is so much that Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, no. 7007.

ii. Qur'ān 2:225, 2:235, and 2:263.

إِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ حَلِيماً فَتَحَلَّمْ فَإِنَّهُ قَلَّ مَنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ إِلَّا أَوْشَكَ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنْهُم

> If you are not forbearing, then pretend to be forbearing because it rarely happens that a person who makes himself like a group does not become one of them.[i]

Someone who, in the face of disagreeable actions, himself behaves with forbearance, has attained a kind of rational and spiritual tranquillity. His behaviour is accompanied by intellection, he has overcome his self, and he has not allowed himself to be belittled and degraded due to insignificant affairs. With such a disposition, he has unconsciously belittled the opposite person who has behaved ignorantly with him.

i. al-Radī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 207.

33
THE RIGHT OF THE FRIEND

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّاحِبِ فَأَنْ تَصْحَبَهُ بِالْفَضْلِ مَا وَجَدْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَ إِلَّا فَلَا أَقَلَّ مِنَ الْإِنْصَافِ وَ أَنْ تُكْرِمَهُ كَمَا يُكْرِمُكَ وَ تَحْفَظَهُ كَمَا يَحْفَظُكَ وَ لَا يَسْبِقَكَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَهُ إِلَى مَكْرُمَةٍ فَإِنْ سَبَقَكَ كَافَأْتَهُ وَ لَا تُقَصِّرَ بِهِ عَمَّا يَسْتَحِقُّ مِنَ الْمَوَدَّةِ تُلْزِمُ نَفْسَكَ نَصِيحَتَهُ وَ حِيَاطَتَهُ وَ مُعَاضَدَتَهُ عَلَى طَاعَةِ رَبِّهِ وَ مَعُونَتَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ فِيمَا لَا يَهُمُّ بِهِ مِنْ مَعْصِيَةِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةً وَ لَا تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ عَذَاباً وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the friend is that, as much as possible, you maintain a kind and amiable friendship with him. If this is not possible, then at least maintain a fair companionship with him. In the same way that he respects you, you too respect him. Just as he supports you, you too support him. He should not precede you in a noble deed, and if he does precede you then recompense him for it. Do not neglect [the friendship] and love that he deserves. Make it a responsibility upon yourself to seek goodness for him, to protect him, to assist him in obeying his Lord, and to help him in overpowering his soul by abandoning those

sins [that he commits] against his Lord and does not give importance to. Moreover, be a mercy for him, not a punishment. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING FRIENDS IN ISLAM

The Holy *sharī'ah* wants a person to succeed in attaining noble *akhlāq*, in the implementation of religious responsibilities, and in having a desirable material life. Keeping that in mind, in addition to needing various other social relationships, an innate need for friendship and brotherhood has also been placed within a person.[ii] Through these relationships, a person's various emotional, psychological, and material needs may be fulfilled, and he may prepare to move in the direction of achieving Allah's servitude. It is for this reason that Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

الْأَصْدِقَاءُ نَفْسٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فِي جُسُومٍ مُتَفَرِّقَة

Friends are one soul in different bodies.[iii]

مَنْ لَا إِخْوَانَ لَهُ لَا أَهْلَ لَه

Someone who does not have brothers does not have a family.[iv]

أَعْجَزُ النَّاسِ مَنْ عَجَزَ عَنِ اكْتِسَابِ الْإِخْوَانِ وَ أَعْجَزُ مِنْهُ مَنْ ضَيَّعَ مَنْ ظَفِرَ بِهِ مِنْهُم

The most incapable among men is the one who is incapable of acquiring brothers, and more incapable than him

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 266.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 9425.

إِنَّ طِبَاعَكَ تَدْعُوكَ إِلَى مَا أَلِفْتَه

Verily your innate nature calls you towards that which you are fond of.

iii. Ibid., no. 9512.

iv. Ibid., no. 9459.

is someone who, after acquiring a brother, loses him.[i]

On this basis, there are important attributes mentioned in the sayings of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) about friendship and brotherhood, and how to strengthen these bonds. Thereafter, they have also explained the rights and responsibilities of a friend.

CONDITIONS OF A GOOD FRIEND

The relationship of friendship and brotherhood has a considerable effect on a person's fate and brings about his felicity or wretchedness. So important is this that Allah chooses Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) as His friend,[ii] and on the other hand, the Noble Qur'ān says:

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا

> It will be a day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying, "I wish I had followed the Apostle's way! Woe to me! I wish I had not taken so and so as a friend!" (25:27-28)

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned points, we will briefly mention the attributes of a good friend as taken from traditions. In this way, we can move forward with an understanding of the real criteria in terms of choosing friends.

1. Someone whose brotherhood is not for attaining the world.[iii]

2. Someone who rushes towards good, attracts you towards doing the same, commands you to righteousness, and assists you in it.[iv]

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 12.

ii. Qur'ān 4:125.

iii. al-Āmudī, *Taṣnīf ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 9532.

خَيْرُ الْإِخْوَانِ مَنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا أُخُوَّتُه

The best brother is one whose brotherhood is not based on worldly gain.

iv. Ibid., no. 9534.

3. Someone who makes you aware of your defects and protects you in your absence.[i]

4. Someone who forbids injustice and transgression.[ii]

5. Someone who assists you financially. This means that everything he wants for himself, he wants for you too.[iii]

6. Someone who does not let his brothers need anyone other than himself. This means that he himself fulfils the needs of his brother as much as he can. Moreover, he does not do something that will cause his brother to develop a specific worldly need, aside from the primary needs he already has.[iv]

7. Someone who assists his brother in the best manner, regardless of whether he is in difficulty or ease.[v]

8. Someone who is concerned about you. This means that he

خَيْرُ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ سَارَعَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَ جَذَبَكَ إِلَيْهِ وَ أَمَرَكَ بِالْبِرِّ وَ أَعَانَكَ عَلَيْه

The best of your brothers is one who rushes towards good and pulls you towards it and enjoins you to righteousness and assists you in it.

i. Ibid., no. 9475.

مَنْ بَصَّرَكَ عَيْبَكَ وَ حَفِظَكَ فِي غَيْبِكَ فَهُوَ الصَّدِيقُ فَاحْفَظْه

One who points out your faults to you and defends you in your absence, then he is your true friend, so protect him.

ii. Ibid., no. 9477.

الصَّدِيقُ مَنْ كَانَ نَاهِياً عَنِ الظُّلْمِ وَ الْعُدْوَانِ مُعِيناً عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَ الْإِحْسَان

The [true] friend is he who forbids [one from] injustice and wrongdoing while helping [one] to perform good deeds and be righteous.

iii. Ibid., no. 9523.

خَيْرُ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ وَاسَاك

The best of your brothers is the one who assists you financially [in your time of need].

iv. Ibid., no. 9529.

خَيْرُ الْإِخْوَانِ مَنْ لَا يُحْوِجُ إِخْوَانَهُ إِلَى سِوَاه

The best of brothers is the one who makes it unnecessary for his brother to seek from anyone other than him.

v. Ibid., no. 9521.

wants your honour and prestige to be protected, both your honour as a human and your honour as a believer.[i]

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

لَا تَكُونُ الصَّدَاقَةُ إِلَّا بِحُدُودِهَا فَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِيهِ هَذِهِ الْحُدُودُ أَوْ شَيْءٌ مِنْهُ وَ إِلَّا فَلَا تَنْسُبْهُ إِلَى شَيْءٍ مِنَ الصَّدَاقَةِ فَأَوَّلُهَا أَنْ تَكُونَ سَرِيرَتُهُ وَ عَلَانِيَتُهُ لَكَ وَاحِدَةً وَ الثَّانِيَةُ أَنْ يَرَى زَيْنَكَ زَيْنَهُ وَ شَيْنَكَ شَيْنَهُ وَ الثَّالِثَةُ أَنْ لَا تُغَيِّرَهُ عَلَيْكَ وِلَايَةٌ وَ لَا مَالٌ وَ الرَّابِعَةُ لَا يَمْنَعُكَ شَيْئاً تَنَالُهُ مَقْدُرَتُهُ وَ الْخَامِسَةوَ هِيَ تَجْمَعُ هَذِهِ الْخِصَالَ أَنْ لَا يُسْلِمَكَ عِنْدَ النَّكَبَاتِ

Friendship is not realized except through its boundaries, so whoever possess them all or a part of them [then he is a friend], otherwise do not ascribe friendship to him. The first of them is that his outward conduct and his private conduct should be the same with you. The second of them is that he should consider your adornment as his adornment and your defect as his own defect. The third of them is that if he acquires a position or wealth, his relationship with you should not change. The fourth of them is that he should not withhold from you anything that he is able to do [any assistance he can give]. The fifth of them—and this is comprehensive of all these attributes—is that he should not abandon you in difficulties.[ii]

Acquiring such a friend and brother is among the blessings of

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أَصْدَقُ الْإِخْوَانِ مَوَدَّةً أَفْضَلُهُمْ لِإِخْوَانِهِ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَ الضَّرَّاءِ مُوَاسَاةً

The brother whose friendship is strongest is one who is most supportive of his brother [both] in times of ease and difficulty.

i. Ibid., no. 9488.

مَنِ اهْتَمَّ بِكَ فَهُوَ صَدِيقُك

He who is concerned about you is indeed your friend.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 249.

Allah. According to a saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), looking at such a friend out of Allah's love is worship,[i] and because this friendship is for the sake of Allah, it lasts.[ii]

RIGHTS OF A GOOD FRIEND

1. Righteous and Fair Behaviour

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if you find such a friend or brother, then associate with him with goodness and amiability as much as possible. Do not fall short in being kind and sacrificing for him, using your position, prestige, wealth, or speech to assist him. If you are incapable of sacrificing or serving him more than he served you, then at least behave with him in the following fair manner: if he respects you verbally then you should also verbally respect him. Or for example, if he is assists you financially then you too assist him financially.

2. Protecting One's Friend

The Imam says that just as he protects you, you should protect him too. This means that if he protects and hides your defects, then you also should try to hide his defects. If you were travelling and he protected your family, you should also act in the same way with

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i. Ibid., vol. 71, p. 279, no. 1.

النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْعَالِمِ عِبَادَةٌ وَ النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْإِمَامِ الْمُقْسِطِ عِبَادَةٌ وَ النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْوَالِدَيْنِ بِرَأْفَةٍ وَ رَحْمَةٍ عِبَادَةٌ وَ النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْأَخِ تَوَدُّهُ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عِبَادَةٌ

To look at a scholar is worship, to look at a just Imam is worship, to look at one's parents out of compassion and mercy is worship, and to look at a brother whom you love for the sake of Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, is worship.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 1795.

الْإِخْوَانُ فِي اللَّهِ تَدُومُ مَوَدَّتُهُمْ لِدَوَامِ سَبَبِهَا

The amity between those who are brothers for the sake of Allah endures because of its firm foundation.

respect to his family.

If one has a friendly relationship with someone and has gained their confidence in certain matters—especially in matters related to one's dignity and prestige—if he then betrays this individual, he will undoubtedly be inflicted with Divine punishment. Sometimes out of their closeness with one another, some friends mingle with the spouses of their friends, going as far as eating together on one table. In the view of Islam, the limits of friendship must be maintained. When two individuals cross these boundaries then both are afflicted with certain types of corruption.

3. Preceding Him in Goodness

If your friend precedes you in saying *salām*, loaning money, or resolving your problems, then you should recompense this. God forbid you are negligent when there is a chance to recompense and help him! Many types of spiritual deprivations arise due to such negligence. This is because Allah loves a believer, and He does not like it when someone is negligent regarding a believer. In fact, being careless in these affairs is tantamount to being negligent of Allah Himself. Thus, it causes certain specific deprivations from Allah.

4. Seeking Goodness and Assisting Him in the Servitude of Allah

A person needs admonition, and it is not necessary that the admonisher be someone with a higher position. A believer should always ready his soul to receive admonition and he should accept it whoever it may come from, especially when it comes from someone who is aware of his inner pains and problems. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

أَحَبُّ إِخْوَانِي إِلَيَّ مَنْ أَهْدَى إِلَيَّ عُيُوبِي

The best of my friends is he who gifts me my defects.[i]

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 639, no. 5.

The reason why these matters have been given importance is so that a person may become aware of his soul's defects in its relationship with Allah and its relationship with other human beings. For this reason, it is said that one who wants to embark upon the path of rectifying himself must ready his soul to accept admonition. If a person is admonished but he refuses to accept, then he will gradually deprive his soul of the chance to rectify. Moreover, Allah closes the doors of His mercy on such a person.[i] And if the soul is left alone, it moves towards the world, pleasure-seeking, and selfishness, to such an extent that it ends up worshipping itself. Even though the Divine Prophets were needless of others' admonition, but to awaken this feeling of need within us, they would also act in this way. For example, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said to Jibra'īl:

يَا جَبْرَئِيلُ عِظْنِي

O Jibra'īl! Admonish me.[ii]

5. Assistance in Piety and Abandoning Sins

In continuation, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that you must assist him to grab hold of the reins of his soul, such that he does not move towards sin. Pay attention to the extent that Allah emphasizes the establishment of the bond of *wilāyah* among believers. It is not right that a believer remains indifferent regarding his believing brother and says, "It does not concern me if he sins!" Rather, to the same extent that there is love between them, there exists a type of *wilāyah* also,[iii] and this bond of *wilāyah* entails certain things. One of the things entailed by it is that when a believer inclines towards

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 7743.

مَنْ خَالَفَ النُّصْحَ هَلَك

One who opposes admonition is destroyed.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 471, no. 1360.

iii. Qur'ān 9:71

sin, his believing friend must prevent him from committing that sin, to the best of his ability.

6. Assistance in Repentance and Returning Back to Allah

In continuation, the Imam says that even if he commits sins at times, be kind to him so that you can attract him towards Allah and so that he abandons sinning. Do not bother him, do not taunt him with your words, and do not mention his sin in front of him. His conscious is already tormenting him, and he is in distress, there is no need to trouble him even more. Rather, you should console him and remind him of Allah's mercy, so that, gently and loving, he returns towards Allah.

MATTERS THAT DESTROY FRIENDSHIP

Material inclinations have been providentially placed within a person's existence. If he does not control these inclinations as mentioned in the religious commandments, he will undoubtedly be afflicted with its undesirable consequences. These inclinations can appear and manifest themselves in all human relationships, one of which is the relationship of friendship. The infallible Imams (peace be upon them) have mentioned matters that cause brotherhood to be destroyed. For this reason, apart from the necessity of fulfilling the rights of brotherhood, one must also refrain from these matters.

1. Envy

This trait is one of the *akhlāqī* vices and is reprehensible. It appears even more so in relationships between friends, when one's friend attains a material or spiritual blessing. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said:

حَسَدُ الصَّدِيقِ مِنْ سُقْمِ الْمَوَدَّة

The envy of a friend is a sign of illness in their love [and

friendship].[i]

2. Having a Bad Opinion (Sū' al-Zann)

This state of having a bad opinion about others and suspecting them is also one of the sins and *akhlāqī* vices. It is problematic with respect to everybody, but particularly in relationships between friends, it has an even worse effect. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said:

لَا يَغْلِبَنَّ عَلَيْكَ سُوءُ الظَّنِّ فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَدَعُ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ صَدِيقٍ صَفْحا

> Having a bad opinion should not overcome you because it does not let any relationship remain between you and your friend.[ii]

3. Fault-finding

It is possible that every individual, in the various aspects of their personal and social life, appears to be good and displays good behaviour. Yet at the same time, there may be negative aspects in their speech and their personal and social conduct, which are not so visible. In fact, it is possible that the person himself is unaware of these. Now, if one expects that others, especially his close friends, should not have any negative traits and if he carefully inspects all aspects of their lives, then such an attitude causes disruption and weakness in the relationship of brotherhood and friendship. It is for this reason that Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said:

مَنْ نَاقَشَ الْإِخْوَانَ قَلَّ صَدِيقُه

> If a person finds faults in his brothers [by carefully inspecting their affairs], then his friends will decrease.[iii]

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 218.

ii. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 74, p. 207.

iii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 8772.

Moreover, a person himself is not without faults. Having such an attitude causes others also to become sensitive and precise regarding his own actions and conduct, and when they become aware of his hidden defects, they will sever their relationship with him.

4. Hurting Others

Hurting others, especially believers, is one of the most blameworthy actions which can be performed by a person in this worldly life. It stems from selfishness and self-centeredness. The Noble Qur'ān introduces those who hurt believers as being sinners.[i] Hurting others sometimes happens through the tongue and sometimes through various actions and behaviours, in such a way that others, even animals, may be hurt due to a person's interaction. Among the instances of hurting a believer is to consider him abject and to belittle him. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says in this regard:

> قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى مَنْ أَهَانَ لِي وَلِيّاً فَقَدْ أَرْصَدَ لِمُحَارَبَتِي
>
> Allah the Provider of abundance and the Sublime said, "The one who demeans and scorns My close servant has prepared himself for my enmity and battle."[ii]

5. Boasting and Disputing

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

> إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ يَصْفُوَ لَكَ وُدُّ أَخِيكَ فَلَا تُمَازِحَنَّهُ وَ لَا تُمَارِيَنَّهُ وَ لَا تُبَاهِيَنَّهُ وَ لَا تُشَارَّنَّه
>
> If you want the friendship of your brother with you to be pure and untainted, then do not joke with him [too much], do not dispute with him [that is do not engage in long conversations in which no matter of truth is being

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i. Qur'ān 33:57.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 351, no. 3.

established], do not boast with him, and do not display enmity.[i]

The above-mentioned affairs are blameworthy acts and traits and are not limited to a specific type of relationship. However, they particularly destroy the relationships between friends and family, and can result in a hostile separation taking place.

UNDESIRABLE FRIENDSHIP

By considering the attributes of a good friend, the attributes of a bad friend can also be understood. But, due to the importance of this matter, the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) have also mentioned the attributes and traits of a bad friend and an undesirable friendship. These narrations allow us to pay more attention to this issue and avoid becoming afflicted with such types of friendships and their harms.

Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

شَرُّ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ أَغْرَاكَ بِهَوًى وَ وَلَّهَكَ بِالدُّنْيَا

The worst of your brothers is the one who beguiles you with vain desire [by making you follow it] and distracts you with this world.[ii]

شَرُّ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ تَثَبَّطَ عَنِ الْخَيْرِ وَ ثَبَّطَكَ مَعَه

The worst of your brothers is the one who is slow in performing good deeds and slows you down [from doing good] along with him.[iii]

شَرُّ الْإِخْوَانِ الْمُوَاصِلُ عِنْدَ الرَّخَاءِ وَ الْمُفَاصِلُ عِنْدَ الْبَلَاء

The worst brother is the one who keeps ties with you in good times but abandons you in times of difficulty.[iv]

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 291.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 5715.

iii. Ibid., no. 5733.

iv. Ibid., no. 5714.

شَرُّ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ يَبْتَغِي لَكَ شَرَّ يَوْمِه

The worst of your brothers is the one who seeks that you experience the worst part of his day.[i]

شَرُّ الْأَصْحَابِ السَّرِيعُ الِانْقِلَاب

The worst companion is the one who changes quickly [meaning that he does not have firmness in his friendship and due to the smallest encounter or by seeing the smallest thing, he separates from his friend].[ii]

In the end, is necessary to mention that one must be careful when they establish a friendship and companionship with someone else, that they do not disclose all their secrets to him. This is because sometimes these friendly relationships may be severed and the other person, due to the overpowering of his self's desires, may reveal all the secrets of his friend and cause him to be disgraced. Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) said:

ابْذُلْ لِصَدِيقِكَ كُلَّ الْمَوَدَّةِ وَ لَا تَبْذُلْ لَهُ كُلَّ الطُّمَأْنِينَة

Grant to your friend all [your] love and affection, but do not grant to him all [your] confidence.[iii]

This means that you should not tell him about all the secrets of your life, your family, your finances, or other affairs of your life such as your specific spiritual states.

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i. Ibid., no. 5704.

ii. Ibid., no. 5742.

iii. al-Karājakī, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, vol. 1, p. 93.

34
THE RIGHT OF THE PARTNER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الشَّرِيكِ فَإِنْ غَابَ كَفَيْتَهُ وَ إِنْ حَضَرَ سَاوَيْتَهُ وَ لَا تَعْزِمْ عَلَى حُكْمِكَ دُونَ حُكْمِهِ وَ لَا تَعْمَلْ بِرَأْيِكَ دُونَ مُنَاظَرَتِهِ وَ تَحْفَظُ عَلَيْهِ مَالَهُ وَ تَنْفِي عَنْهُ خِيَانَتَهُ فِيمَا عَزَّ أَوْ هَانَ فَإِنَّهُ بَلَغَنَا أَنَّ يَدَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الشَّرِيكَيْنِ مَا لَمْ يَتَخَاوَنَا وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the partner is that if he is absent, you suffice him [by taking up his work], and if he is present you [perform your responsibility in a way that you] are equal to him. Do not decide on your own view as opposed to his and do not act on your own opinion without debating and discussing it with him [do not be inconsiderate and self-centred]. Protect his wealth and counter any treachery with regards to him, be it something significant or something of little importance. For verily it has reached us [in a tradition] that the hand of Allah [His *barakah* or abundant blessings] is on two partners so long as they do not betray each other. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 267.

THE *FIQHI* AND *AKHLAQI* IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP

The issues that Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) mentions regarding the rights of servitude include a person's *akhlāqī* responsibilities in different relationships and at times also briefly indicate the legal *fiqhī* responsibilities, as mentioned in Islamic jurisprudence. Among these relationships is the relationship of partnership in financial matters.[i] This kind of financial relationship brings about some jurisprudential and legal responsibilities upon the partners. In addition to that, some *akhlāqī* responsibilities must also be observed.

THE RIGHTS OF THE PARTNER

The issue of partnership is very important in all societies, especially in a faithful society, and must be paid precise attention to. Sometimes, partnership comes about in a forced way such as inherited wealth. Inherited wealth automatically becomes the property of the various inheritors, and as long as this inherited wealth is not divided up, all of them are partners in it. Each in accordance with the amount of their share. If one of the inheritors were to use that wealth without the permission of the others, the usage or transaction performed would be invalid. At times this can even cause prayers to be invalid, for example if prayers are performed while wearing clothes purchased in this invalid manner.

Another instance of wealth in which many individuals are partners is the common treasury (*bayt al-māl*). This is something that must be very carefully dealt with, it must be spent for the common interests of society so that one is not liable to the people. One who betrays

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i. The chapter of partnership (*kitāb al-sharikah*) is a specific chapter in traditional books of Islamic jurisprudence, and it discusses how property can come to be jointly owned by people, and how it can later be divided. Joint ownership here means that every part of the property is owned by two or more people, in accordance with the share of ownership they have. Such discussions of joint ownership come up repeatedly in other chapters of Islamic jurisprudence as well, and they are the subject of discussion in this section. (Ed.)

the people and misappropriates the funds of the common treasury, must return the money back to the same place it was usurped from if his repentance is to be accepted.

The Imam (peace be upon him) says that if your partner is not present, you must utilize the shared wealth in such a way that his right is not wasted and lost. This is because in partnership, each partner owns a specific share and has a right to utilize the amount of their own share in the shared wealth. Of course, specific additional commitments may have been made in the contract that must be abided by. On the other hand, each partner jointly shares ownership of every part of the shared wealth. Thus, if one's partner is absent at the time of utilizing the wealth, then they are responsible to preserve his share and pay it to him. But if the partner is present, one must act with him with equality and as per the regulations specified in the contract. It should not be the case that one utilizes the wealth without the consultation and permission of their partner because from a *shar'ī* point of view, the validity of any usage of the shared wealth is dependent and conditional on the permission of all partners. This is discussed in detail in Islamic jurisprudence. For example, if two partners have bought a house together, then one of them does not have the right to even hammer a nail in the wall, cause any change, or use the house in any way, without the other's permission. If such permission is not granted, then the utilizer will be liable.

Also, a person must protect the wealth of his partner and refrain from betraying him, regardless of whether it is with respect to an abundant amount of wealth or even a tiny and inconsiderable amount. For this reason, each partner must act according to the responsibility they have with respect to one another and must not transgress those responsibilities.

The hand of Allah assists the partners as long as they do not betray one another. Such a partnership is blessed with abundance, it safeguards a person's material life and makes him develop righteous attributes in his soul. A sense of altruism and desiring that goodness reaches others, especially believers, is enlivened and develops

in him. This in turn causes such a person to become the object of Allah's grace.

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THE RIGHT OF WEALTH

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمَالِ فَأَنْ لَا تَأْخُذَهُ إِلَّا مِنْ حِلِّهِ وَ لَا تُنْفِقَهُ إِلَّا فِي حِلِّهِ وَ لَا تُحَرِّفَهُ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَ لَا تَصْرِفَهُ عَنْ حَقَائِقِهِ وَ لَا تَجْعَلَهُ إِذَا كَانَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ وَ سَبَباً إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ لَا تُؤْثِرَ بِهِ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ مَنْ لَعَلَّهُ لَا يَحْمَدُكَ وَ بِالْحَرِيِّ أَنْ لَا يُحْسِنَ خِلَافَتَهُ فِي تَرِكَتِكَ وَ لَا يَعْمَلَ فِيهِ بِطَاعَةِ رَبِّكَ فَتَكُونَ مُعِيناً لَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ أَوْ بِمَا أَحْدَثَ فِي مَالِكَ أَحْسَنَ نَظَراً لِنَفْسِهِ فَيَعْمَلَ بِطَاعَةِ رَبِّهِ فَيَذْهَبَ بِالْغَنِيمَةِ وَ تَبُوءَ بِالْإِثْمِ وَ الْحَسْرَةِ وَ النَّدَامَةِ مَعَ التَّبِعَةِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of wealth is that you do not acquire it except through lawful means, and you do not spend it except in a lawful way. You must not deflect it from its proper place nor hold it back from its rightful usage. And because the wealth is from Allah, do not let it be spent except in His path and as a cause of earning Allah's proximity. And do not give preference over yourself to the one [from among your inheritors] who may not thank you [for the inheritance he gets]. And it is very possible that he will not be a good deputy [for you] with regards to your wealth

> and will not act with it in accordance with your Lord's obedience, so you would have assisted him in that. Or he will deal with your wealth in a good manner for himself, acting according to his Lord's obedience. In this situation he will benefit, while the burden of sin and its rue and regret along with its punishment shall remain for you. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

The first right with respect to wealth is to discharge its obligatory responsibilities. This bring about various effects on the spirit, in the hereafter, and even in this world, some of which are mentioned in this book. In what follows below, we will list these obligatory rights so that the awareness necessary for acting on them is acquired.

1) Zakāt
1) Khums
1) Hajj, when one has the ability
1) The *nafaqah* (living expenses) for someone whose *nafaqah* is obligatory such as one's wife, those children who are under one's support, one's father and mother.
1) Assisting the Religious Government.
1) Helping a destitute person who is on the verge of perishing, if no one else is there to save him.
1) Spending wealth to obtain the preliminaries of certain obligations in the *sharī'ah* such as the water for *wudū'* and *ghusl*.

The recommended instances of responsibilities related to wealth are many, some of which are of specific importance such as spending wealth for propagating religion, assisting religious scholars, giving loans, constructing masjids, building hospitals, constructing roads, building bridges, taking care of needy relatives, neighbours, and believers.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 267.

INSTANCES OF PERMISSIBLE AND PROHIBITED ACQUISITION OF WEALTH

The financial commandments in the *sharī'ah* are there so a person may acquire wealth in a permissible manner. They are mentioned in detail in the discussions of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) such as the discussions of commerce (*tijārah*), renting (*ijārah*), *musāqāt*, *muzāra'ah*, partnership (*mushārakah*), *mudārabah*, and gifting (*hadiyah*).[i]

On the other hand, in the luminous commandments of the religion of Islam, there are certain ways through which, if one acquires his wealth, he does not even become the owner of that wealth and in the eyes of the religion he is liable to return it to its rightful owner. This is in addition to its being a prohibited act, worthy of punishment in the hereafter. For example, the wealth acquired through *ribā* (usury), bribery, spending wealth for propagating falsehood, buying and selling prohibited things (such as liquor, instruments of gambling, or *mītah* (corpses)), stealing, acquiring wealth by performing prohibited actions such as *zinā*, sodomy, or by being neglectful in performing personal or governmental responsibilities that one is charged with, and similar such instances. There are also instances in which specific transactions are disliked (*makrūh*) and it is better that the transaction does not take place.

THE NECESSITY OF MANAGING ONE'S INCLINATION TOWARDS WEALTH

That word wealth is used for that which a person brings under his control so that he may fulfil his needs through it. Based on the

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i. *Musāqāt*, *muzāra'ah*, and *muḍārabah* are three types of contracts mentioned in Islamic jurisprudence. In each of them there is an owner (*mālik*) and a worker (*'āmil*) who both agree to share the profits of their endeavour with one another. *Musāqāt* is when the owner of a garden employs a worker to water and care for the garden, such that they share in the fruits. *Muzāra'ah* is when a landowner employs a farmer to grow crops on his land, such that they share in the harvest. Lastly, *muḍārabah* is when an owner of capital employs someone to go and engage in business with his money, such that they share in the profit. For more information, refer to any comprehensive work of Islamic Jurisprudence. (Ed.)

system of Allah's creation, human beings have needs. To fulfil these needs, the natural instinct of employing and making use of various affairs and benefitting from the achievements of other human beings has also been put inside their existence.

The things which a person brings under his possession are considered to be his own wealth. And as a part of his nature, the inclination towards wealth in this world has been put inside a person's existence. Thus, a person must behave with this inclination in a correct manner and train himself appropriately. The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

> Indeed, the human has been created covetous: anxious when an ill befalls him and grudging when good [wealth] comes his way – [all are such] except those who pray. (70:19-22)

The human has been created with greed in his nature so that he strives to acquire wealth to answer his material needs. He also naturally behaves stingily when he has an abundance of wealth and becomes impatient when in difficulty. However, individuals who are humble in front of Allah employ these natural inclinations in the right direction. Thus, it is mentioned that those who pray are exceptions from this natural inclination. They do not prevent spending wealth in the right cause, and they do not become sad or fearful in the face of evil.

In some of the narrations which have reached us from the infallible Imams (peace be upon them), wealth and the material affairs of the world have been disparaged. This is due to an illegitimate and irrational usage of them. Thus, in contrary to that, in other narrations wealth has been praised and we have been advised to acquire it. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said:

أَفْضَلُ الْمَالِ مَا وُقِيَ بِهِ الْعِرْضُ وَ قُضِيَتْ بِهِ الْحُقُوق

> The best wealth is that through which the dignity is protected, and rights are fulfilled.[i]

As the human has been created greedy, Shayṭān takes advantage of this potential and encourages him so that in this way he falls into perdition. Regarding this issue the Noble Qur'ān warns us in the following way:

> أَلْهَاكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ
>
> Mutual rivalry in increasing [one's wealth and children and so on] distracted you until you visited [even] the graves. [Rather than taking heed from the graveyard, even there, you boasted with one another]. (102:1-2)

This distraction is there for both the believer and the disbeliever but the enticement and lure of Shayṭān are more for the believer. For this reason, Allah says the following addressing the believers in Sūrah al-munāfiqūn:

> يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ
>
> O you who have faith! Do not let your possessions and children distract you from the remembrance of Allah, and whoever does that—it is they who are the losers. (63:9)

Sometimes a person is apparently not after the acquisition of wealth and position, but deep in his existence there is a yearning and sorrow towards them. It is this internal state that makes him fall.

At the first stage, that which controls a person's usage of his wealth is that very thing said by Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), that the source of income and the spending should be in a permissible way. In the continuation of the narration, the Imam says that one must not cause the wealth to deviate away from its rightful place and true reality. If it is from Allah—which of course it is—then do not

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 7, no. 60.

let it be spent in the path of anyone except Him. And do not prefer others over yourself in spending it as they might not do the same. This statement is very precise, he says that when you have acquired the wealth through a permissible way, be attentive to the fact that it was by the means and help of Allah and due to this very reason do not spend it anywhere but in His path.

As much as wealth increases, the responsibility of a person also increases. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَا كَثُرَ مَالُ رَجُلٍ قَطُّ إِلَّا عَظُمَتِ الْحُجَّةُ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ قَدَرْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْفَعُوهَا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَافْعَلُوا فَقَالَ لَهُ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ بِمَا ذَا قَالَ بِقَضَاءِ حَوَائِجِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِكُم

"Nobody's wealth ever increased except that the argument and proof of Allah against him became great. Thus, if you are capable of driving back Allah's argument from yourself, then do so." The Imam was asked, "O son of the Messenger of Allah. How?" He said, "By fulfilling the needs of your brothers with your wealth." (i)

Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) says:

خَيْرُ مَالِ الْمَرْءِ ذَخَائِرُ الصَّدَقَة

The best wealth of a person is the charity that he saves. (ii)

Meaning, that which he spends for the sake of Allah remains. Therefore, a person can get rid of the negligence that Shayṭān creates for him and take spiritual advantages from material affairs. However, sometimes a person accumulates wealth with the intention of helping others, but then Shayṭān deceives him. After accumulating the wealth, Shayṭān makes him stingy such that he unconsciously becomes afflicted with the vice of vainglory and seeking to increase one's wealth.

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 302, no. 39.

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 2, p. 182.

Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) said:

لَا يُجْمَعُ الْمَالُ إِلَّا بِخَمْسِ خِصَالٍ بِبُخْلٍ شَدِيدٍ وَ أَمَلٍ طَوِيلٍ وَ حِرْصٍ غَالِبٍ وَ قَطِيعَةِ الرَّحِمِ وَ إِيثَارِ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ

Wealth does not get accumulated except with five attributes: 1. Excessive stinginess. 2. Far-fetched desires and aspirations. 3. Dominant greed, 4. Severance of relationships with one's relatives. 5. Preferring the world over the hereafter.[i]

A person who is excessively stingy does not make use of that which he has acquired and accumulates his wealth. Someone who has far-fetched desires, initially devises a plan as to how he will attain them. Then, when he does attain those desires, he says to himself, "my desire has only just been realized!" And he continues to devise plans to attain other desires of his. One who has severe greed—which generally is accompanied with far-fetched desires—feels that whatever he acquires is less. By taking on multiple projects and working multiple jobs he is always after increasing his wealth. One who loves his wealth, considers it necessary that he should not spend on others and for his relatives. And finally, the one whose heart is attached to his wealth, prefers the world over his hereafter.

THE NECESSITY OF SPENDING WEALTH IN THE PATH OF ALLAH AND WITH SINCERITY (*IKHLĀS*)

Of course, there are people in society who spend their wealth during their own lifetime—and their inheritors similarly spend it after their death—in the path of goodness, such as for building hospitals, schools, and masjids. In such cases, the scroll of their deeds is not closed by their death and in the hereafter, goodness will continue to be written for them. However, it is clear that these good deeds will only have such an outcome if they are accompanied with

i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 21, p. 561.

sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and are not performed for acquiring a position, fame, and so on.

The infallible Imams (peace be upon them), who were embodiments of sincerity and piety, used to strive so that nobody would know about their good deeds. If their deeds were attributed to others, they would not object to that and reject it. Imam ʿAlī and Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon them) would carry sacks of dates and food on their own shoulders late at night and would give them to the destitute without disclosing their identity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN SPENDING IN THE WAY OF ALLAH

As much as possible a person should himself take steps to embark upon the path of goodness, during his own lifetime. If he can, he should spend from his wealth, and if he does not have wealth then by means of his tongue, his pen, and his own feet he should take steps on the path of fulfilling others' needs. The infallible Imams (peace be upon them) used to help others financially, and if they did not have wealth in their hands then they would help others by means of their pen or tongue.

In the time of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), a man came to him and asked him to write a letter to one of the governors who was a Shīʿah, asking him to do good to him. After beginning the letter with the name of Allah, the Imam wrote:

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّ مُوصِلَ كِتَابِي هَذَا ذَكَرَ عَنْكَ مَذْهَباً جَمِيلًا وَ إِنَّ مَا لَكَ مِنْ عَمَلِكَ مَا أَحْسَنْتَ فِيهِ فَأَحْسِنْ إِلَى إِخْوَانِكَ وَ اعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ سَائِلُكَ عَنْ مَثَاقِيلِ الذَّرِّ وَ الْخَرْدَلِ ...

The conveyer of this letter of mine has mentioned you as having a good religion. Indeed, [know that] that which will remain for you from your actions are the good deeds that you perform. Thus, do good deeds towards your brothers and know that Allah the Invincible and Majestic

> calls you to account even for the *mithqāls* (weight) of the small particles and mustard seeds.

When the governor saw the letter, he placed it on his eyes and erased all the taxes that the man owed, from the register.[i]

In continuation of this right, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says to not give preference to others over yourself in spending the wealth as maybe that person is someone who will not be grateful to you. It is befitting that a person does not pass on the responsibility of spending his wealth in good deeds, to his inheritors. This is because some inheritors make use of the deceased's wealth but do not appreciate its value, rather they insult and swear at him. For example, they say, "Why is it so little? Why did he only leave me this much?!" Sometimes, they begin to fight over the wealth of the deceased even before he has been buried, and sometimes they do not act in accordance with his will. These individuals must answer for such actions in the presence of Allah.

'Ā'ishah says that the Muslims slaughtered a sheep and distributed it among the needy. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked:

> مَا بَقِيَ؟ فَقَالَتْ: مَا بَقِيَ إِلَّا كَتِفُهَا، قَالَ: بَقِيَ كُلُّهَا غَيْرَ كَتِفِهَا
>
> "How much of it is left?" 'Ā'ishah replied, "Only its shoulder is remaining." He said, "Everything [that was given away in charity] is remaining except its shoulder."[ii]

This is because that which is utilized in the way of Allah remains and that which only has a worldly dimension to it, perishes.

Wealth itself is destroyed but its good or evil dimension does not perish. Rather, its good effects or its negative consequences are manifested for a person in the grave and thereafter. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 50, pp. 86-87, no. 2.

ii. al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl*, no. 16150.

إِذَا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَبْرِهِ خَرَجَ مَعَهُ مِثَالٌ يَقْدُمُهُ أَمَامَهُ ... فَيَقُولُ مَنْ أَنْتَ فَيَقُولُ أَنَا السُّرُورُ الَّذِي كُنْتَ أَدْخَلْتَهُ عَلَى أَخِيكَ الْمُؤْمِنِ فِي الدُّنْيَا خَلَقَنِيَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ مِنْهُ لِأُبَشِّرَكَ

When Allah brings the believer out from his grave, a being comes out with him which then walks in front of him ... he asks him, "Who are you?" He [the believer] asks, "Who are you?" He replies, "I am that happiness which you instilled in the heart of your believing brother in the world. Allah the Invincible and Majestic, created me from that [happiness] so that I may give you glad tidings."[i]

THE NECESSITY OF BEING CAREFUL ABOUT HOW WEALTH IS SPENT

One of the questions that will be asked in the realm of the grave and the *barzakh* is regarding wealth. In which manner was it acquired? For which matter was it spent? Just as a believing individual does not have the right to acquire his wealth from every way, after acquiring it he also does not have the right to spend it in any way that he desires. If he utilizes his wealth in a *non-shar'ī* way, he will be taken to account.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

قالَ الشَّيطانُ لَعَنهُ اللّهُ : لَن يَسلَمَ مِنّي صاحِبُ المالِ من إحدى ثلاثٍ أغدو عليهِ بهِنَّ وأروحُ : أخذُهُ مِن غيرِ حِلِّهِ ، وإنفاقُهُ في غيرِ حَقِّهِ ، وأحَبِّبُهُ إلَيهِ فيَمنَعُهُ مِن حَقِّهِ

Shayṭān—may Allah curse him—said, "The possessor of wealth is not safe from me with regards to one of three

i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, pp. 290-291, no. 21.

> things that I come to him with, in the morning and in the evening: 1. That he acquires it [his wealth] from an impermissible way. 2. That he utilizes it for something other than its rightful usage. 3. That I make the wealth appear beloved to him so that he prevents it from [being spent in] its rightful place."[i]

The human imagines that he has independent ownership of the things he possesses. In addition, Shayṭān also strengthens this notion. The person naturally becomes fond of that which he acquires through his efforts and toil, and he attributes these to himself. Hence, to rectify this notion and make it balanced, Allah considers wealth as being His and says:

> وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيمًا

> What harm would it have done them had they believed in Allah and the Last Day, and spent out of what Allah has provided them? Allah knows them well. (4:39)

This means that when a person spends his money, he should not think he is spending something that is completely under his ownership. It is only Allah who is the independent owner of all beings, no one else.

One of the tools that Allah has placed under Shayṭān's jurisdiction is the ability to be a person's partner in his wealth.[ii] This partnership of Shayṭān in a person's wealth means that he encourages him to acquire the wealth from an illegitimate source, and to also utilize it in an unjust manner. In these words, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has imparted in us a deep perspective. He says that even if a person has acquired wealth in a rightful way, it is not befitting that he leaves it such that it remains after him. He should utilize this

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i. al-Mundhirī, *Al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, vol. 4, p. 182.

ii. Qur'ān 17:64.

wealth in the path prescribed by the *sharī'ah* rather than keeping it for his inheritors as a part of his estate.

The meaning of the Imam's words is that, to the best of your ability try to spend that which you have acquired in the path of Allah, for if any wealth remains after you then there is only one of two situations. Either your inheritors will spend it in the path of Allah's obedience, in which case you shall regret why you didn't spend it yourself in this path. Or your inheritors will spend it in other than Allah's path, in which case its burden and evil consequences shall be yours because with your wealth you have strengthened others in their defiance of Allah. For this reason, the Imams (peace be upon them) have warned us that if a person is careless in acquiring wealth and utilizing it then Allah afflicts him with tribulations in this world or the hereafter.[i]

THE IMPORTANCE OF PAYING ATTENTION TO ALLAH WHEN SPENDING WEALTH

When the Imams (peace be upon them) found a potential means for managing their finances they would busy themselves with work and they would struggle. At times they would work in the farm with a spade, and this did not diminish in their status. A person narrates:

دَخَلْنَا عَلَى أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع وَ هُوَ يَعْمَلُ فِي حَائِطٍ لَهُ فَقُلْنَا جَعَلَنَا اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ دَعْنَا نَعْمَلْ لَكَ أَوْ تَعْمَلْهُ الْغِلْمَانُ قَالَ لَا

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i. al-Ṭūsī, *Al-amālī*, p. 182, no. 306

مَنْ كَسَبَ مَالًا مِنْ غَيْرِ حِلِّهِ أَفْقَرَهُ اللَّهُ (عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ)

Whoever earns wealth from an impermissible source, Allah the Invincible and Majestic will make him poor.

al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 100, p. 13, no. 63.

مَنْ لَمْ يُبَالِ مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَ الْمَالَ لَمْ يُبَالِ اللَّهُ مِنْ أَيْنَ أَدْخَلَهُ النَّارَ

A person who does not care from where he acquires wealth, then Allah does not care from where He enters him into the fire.

دَعُونِي فَإِنِّي أَشْتَهِي أَنْ يَرَانِيَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ أَعْمَلُ بِيَدِي وَ أَطْلُبُ الْحَلَالَ فِي أَذًى نَفْسِي

We went to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) when he was working in a garden of his. We said, "May Allah sacrifice us for you! Let us or the servants do the work instead of you!" The Imam said, "No. Let me be in this state! For indeed, I desire that Allah the Invincible and the Majestic, sees me in a state of working with my hands and seeking lawful sustenance by putting myself through difficulty."[i]

Mu'allā ibn Khunays, who had an intense love towards the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), says:

خَرَجَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع فِي لَيْلَةٍ قَدْ رَشَّتِ السَّمَاءُ وَ هُوَ يُرِيدُ ظُلَّةَ بَنِي سَاعِدَةَ فَاتَّبَعْتُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ قَدْ سَقَطَ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ فَقَالَ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ اللَّهُمَّ رُدَّهُ عَلَيْنَا قَالَ فَأَتَيْتُهُ فَسَلَّمْتُ عَلَيْهِ فَقَالَ مُعَلَّى قُلْتُ نَعَمْ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ فَقَالَ لِيَ الْتَمِسْ بِيَدِكَ فَمَا وَجَدْتَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَادْفَعْهُ إِلَيَّ قَالَ فَإِذَا أَنَا بِخُبْزٍ مُنْتَثِرٍ فَجَعَلْتُ أَدْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ مَا وَجَدْتُ فَإِذَا أَنَا بِجِرَابٍ مِنْ خُبْزٍ فَقُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ احْمِلْهُ عَلَيَّ فَقَالَ لَا أَنَا أَوْلَى بِهِ مِنْك

On a rainy night, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) set out for the shelter of the Banū Sā'idah [a place where poor Muslims stayed]. I went after him and saw that something fell from his hands. The Imam said, *"Bismillah.* O Allah return it to us." I came to him and said *salām* to him. The Imam said, "Mu'allā?" I replied, "Yes, may I be sacrificed for you." Then he said to me, "Look with your hand [for that which has fallen] and give to me whatever you find." I found loaves of bread scattered [on the floor],

i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 163, no. 3595.

> and I began to give him what I found until I came across a sack of bread. I said, "May I be sacrificed for you. Allow me to carry it." But he said, 'No, I am more suited to do it than you."[i]

On the one hand, the Imam wanted to perform this charity and good deed in the darkness of the night so that he is not recognized and so that his sincerity in this act is safeguarded. The more sincere a person's intention is—in the acquisition of sustenance as well as in spending wealth—the more of an effect it has on the soul and on the spiritual tranquillity of a person. Moreover, the Imam did not want someone else to perform the good deed. In addition to guiding people, the Imams strove to directly perform acts of goodness with their own hands.

THE TIME TO TAKE A LOAN AND BECOME INDEBTED

Before mentioning the legal and *akhlāqī* responsibilities between the creditor and debtor, it is necessary to briefly discuss the viewpoint of the *awliyā'* of religion regarding going into debt. Allah has equipped a person with tools such as the outward faculties, the intellect, and willpower such that by employing them, by making use of the world of nature, and by taking help from his fellow human beings, a person can fulfil his material needs. In addition, Allah has also designated laws for a person's activities such as the jurisprudential rulings of selling, renting, *ṣulḥ*,[ii] and so on. On the other hand, Allah has highly emphasized that a person should be content with the minimum level in his material life, so that he acquires an outward and spiritual tranquillity along with honour. As much as possible, he should not take a loan or purchase things on credit, which results in

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 93, p. 125.

ii. One of the very flexible and open-ended contracts in Islamic jurisprudence is known as *ṣulḥ*. In *ṣulḥ* one party must give something to the other, for example money, an item of monetary value, or a right that can be transferred. This can be done free of charge, or in return for something that the other party gives. (Ed.)

the mind becoming preoccupied and produces outward and spiritual difficulties. For this reason, taking a loan has been reproached and sometimes it has even been considered to be at the same level as disbelief.[i] In their supplications the *awliyā'* have sought refuge in Allah from being afflicted by loans, and in some supplications, they have asked Allah to pay off their loans.[ii]

However, a person is not always able to provide for his worldly needs to the sufficient extent. At times the job market and one's business is stagnant, and sometimes unwanted expenses entangle a person such as his own illness or that of his family and relatives. In such conditions the person is left with no solution but to take a loan or buy on credit, this was the case in the conduct of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) as well. After advising others to acquire a lawful income, in the case of a shortage of funds, they advised people to take a loan.[iii] Even for recommended matters—such as giving in charity, performing a recommended Hajj, and marriage—it is permissible to take a loan.[iv]

VIRTUES OF GIVING A LOAN

In verses of the Qur'ān[v] and in narrations, innumerable virtues have been mentioned regarding giving a loan. It has been mentioned with expressions that encourage believers towards this righteous act, such as how giving a loan to Allah's servants is like giving a loan

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i. al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*, vol. 18, p. 317, no. 6.

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص يَقُولُ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الْكُفْرِ وَ الدَّيْنِ قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَ تَعْدِلُ الدَّيْنَ بِالْكُفْرِ قَالَ نَعَم

I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) say, "I seek refuge from Allah from disbelief and loans." It was said, "O Messenger of Allah, you consider a loan to be at the same level as disbelief?" He said, "Yes."

ii. Ibid., refer to the narrations in section no. 1 from the sections on *dayn*.

iii. Ibid., refer to section no. 2 from the sections on *dayn*.

iv. Ibid., refer to section no. 3 from the sections on *qarḍ*.

v. Qur'ān 2:245 and 5:12.

to Allah, how it causes an uncountable increase in abundance for a person,[i] and how it causes a person's sins to be erased.[ii] The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

وَ مَنْ أَقْرَضَ أَخَاهُ الْمُسْلِمَ كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ دِرْهَمٍ أَقْرَضَهُ وَزْنَ جَبَلِ أُحُدٍ- مِنْ جِبَالِ رَضْوَى وَ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ حَسَنَاتٌ وَ إِنْ رَفَقَ بِهِ فِي طَلَبِهِ تَعَدَّى بِهِ عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ كَالْبَرْقِ الْخَاطِفِ اللَّامِعِ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ وَ لَا عَذَابٍ وَ مَنْ شَكَا إِلَيْهِ أَخُوهُ الْمُسْلِمُ فَلَمْ يُقْرِضْهُ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ يَوْمَ يَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

And whoever gives a loan to his Muslim brother, then for every *dirham* that he gives as a loan he will have good deeds equivalent to the weight of the mountain of Uḥud—which is one of the mountains of Raḍwā—and the Mount Sinai. And if he is lenient in seeking this loan back, he will pass over the *ṣirāṭ* (bridge) like a sudden flash of brilliant lighting, without any account or any punishment. And whoever does not give a loan to his Muslim brother even though he complained about his need to him, then Allah the Invincible and Majestic will make the Paradise forbidden for him, on the day that the good doers shall be rewarded.[iii]

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i. Qur'ān 57:11-12.

ii. Qur'ān 5:12.

iii. al-'Āmilī, Wasā'il al-shī'ah, vol. 18, p. 331, no. 5.

36
THE RIGHT OF THE CREDITOR

وَ أَمَّا حَقُ الْغَرِيمِ الطَّالِبِ لَكَ فَإِنْ كُنْتَ مُوسِراً أَوْفَيْتَهُ وَ كَفَيْتَهُ وَ أَغْنَيْتَهُ وَ لَمْ تَرْدُدْهُ وَ تَمْطُلْهُ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص قَالَ مَطْلُ الْغَنِيِّ ظُلْمٌ وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ مُعْسِراً أَرْضَيْتَهُ بِحُسْنِ الْقَوْلِ وَ طَلَبْتَ إِلَيْهِ طَلَباً جَمِيلًا وَ رَدَدْتَهُ عَنْ نَفْسِكَ رَدّاً لَطِيفاً وَ لَمْ تَجْمَعْ عَلَيْهِ ذَهَابَ مَالِهِ وَ سُوءَ مُعَامَلَتِهِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ لُؤْمٌ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of the creditor who is seeking you is that if you are well-to-do, then you must pay him back in full, save him from any trouble, and make him needless. Do not refuse him, and do not procrastinate, for verily the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said, "The delaying of a rich person [in paying back the right of the creditor] is injustice." And if you are living in difficult circumstances, then you should satisfy him with good words, respectfully seek [an extension of time] from him and refuse him in a gentle and polite manner. You should not do both things: use up his wealth and mistreat him, for indeed that is something vile and wicked. And there is no strength except

with Allah.[i]

THE NECESSITY OF INTERACTING IN A GENTLE AND HUMBLE MANNER WITH ONE'S CREDITOR

Showing gratitude and ingratitude with respect to the favours of Allah's servants is the same as showing gratitude and ingratitude with respect to the favours of Allah. This brings about good and bad effects, respectively. In this regard, the Noble Qur'ān says:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

> And when your Lord proclaimed, "If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing], but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe." (14:7)

If a person buys something on credit or takes a loan, and despite being able to pay back his debt, keeps procrastinating and does not pay it back, then Allah also behaves strictly with him and punishes him. This action is an example of ingratitude in the face of blessings, which causes the doors of mercy to close upon a person. The chastisement of being ungrateful with respect to blessings is not limited to the hereafter. At times, material or spiritual afflictions faced by a person are the result of the ingratitude he showed with respect to the kindness by others. For this reason, a person must seek to pay off his debts so that Allah brings about ease for him, in his life and his sustenance.

However, if a person is incapable of paying off his debts, then his behaviour with his creditor should be such that it does not make the creditor regret having helped him. For this reason, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that your behaviour with the creditor should be such that it evokes sympathy in him, causes him to give you more time to pay off the debt, and makes him the object of this

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 267.

noble tradition of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), which says:

وَ مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِراً أَظَلَّهُ اللَّهُ بِظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّه

> Whoever grants respite to someone who is in a tight situation [and is unable to pay off his debt on time], Allah will bring him under His shadow [of grace], on the day when there is no shadow save His.[i]

He also says:

اِتَّقُوا دَعْوَةَ المُعْسِرِ

> Beware of [the curse and] the supplication of one who is in a tight situation.[ii]

This means that you should try to give respite and not put pressure on such a person whom you know cannot pay off his debt. Either he cannot pay it at all—for example he is bankrupt and is also a respectable person in society who has a family to feed—or he cannot pay it off on time. In fact, sometimes it can even be obligatory according to the *sharī'ah* to give respite to such a debtor till he acquires the capability to pay back his debt through permissible means and in a rationally accepted manner. Putting pressure on him in such a way that causes him to lose his honour or causes his family to face serious difficulty in terms of their honour, their finances, or their social standing, can at times be prohibited. For this reason, it can become necessary to pay off his debt using the public treasury if the creditor is also under financial pressure.

NOT PAYING OFF A DEBT DESPITE HAVING THE ABILITY TO, IS A FORM OF HYPOCRISY

Exhibiting hypocritical behaviour with believers is the same as exhibiting hypocritical behaviour with Allah. A believer is honoured

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 9, no. 1.

ii. al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl*, no 15420.

in Allah's eyes; having the right relationship with him and preserving his respect due to his faith indicates a person's relationship with Allah. As a result, every type of behaviour shown to believers is, in reality, one's behaviour with Allah.

If someone bestows a favour on a person and in response, he is not only ungrateful but also behaves badly, then this weakens the attributes of faith and humanity in him. Moreover, an animalistic attribute of fierceness comes about inside such a person, so much so that the creditor who only demands his right, is at risk of becoming the victim of aggression. Regardless, if a person procrastinates with his creditor with regards to paying off a debt, then this behaviour is an example of being ungrateful towards blessings. Such ungratefulness causes the doors of Allah's mercy to close on a person, both in this world and the hereafter.[i]

i. Qur'ān 2:15.

37
THE RIGHT OF THE ASSOCIATE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْخَلِيطِ فَأَنْ لَا تَغُرَّهُ وَ لَا تَغُشَّهُ وَ لَا تُكَذِّبَهُ وَ لَا تُغْفِلَهُ وَ لَا تَخْدَعَهُ وَ لَا تَعْمَلَ فِي انْتِقَاضِهِ عَمَلَ الْعَدُوِّ الَّذِي لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى صَاحِبِهِ وَ إِنِ اطْمَأَنَّ إِلَيْكَ اسْتَقْصَيْتَ لَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ وَ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ غَبْنَ الْمُسْتَرْسِلِ رِبًا وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of your associate is that you do not deceive him, you do not act dishonestly towards him, you do not accuse him, you are not heedless of him, you do not cheat him, and you do not strive to break him like an enemy who no longer looks out for his associate. If he trusted you, then you should strive for him as much as possible. And know that deceiving someone who trusted you is like [committing the sin of] usury. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

WAYS OF FULFILLING THE RIGHT OF AN ASSOCIATE

From among all His creation, Allah has given specific traits to a person. He has designated a lofty goal for a person and has also

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 268.

placed paths that are smooth and certain at his disposal to allow him to attain that goal, by means of the best human beings. For this reason, a person has a special need to establish relationships with other human beings. Through correct and complete interactions with others, and by following the commandments of his Lord, he can attain that lofty aim.

One of these relationships is the financial relationship between men, which allows them to fulfil their material needs, for example, by exchanging goods or by extracting natural resources. In this regard, important *fiqhī* and *akhlāqī* advice has been given in the *sharī'ah* with regards to whom a person should associate with, and that they should be people who possess the necessary technical skills in addition to knowing the relevant religious rulings. It is only by following these rulings that Allah's servitude can be realized. Associating with others and working together in this manner, encompasses all the legitimate contracts of the *sharī'ah* such as partnership (*mushārakah*), *mudārabah*, *musāqāt*, and *muzāra'ah*.[i]

In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), mentions important *akhlāqī* issues for correcting and strengthening financial relationships. Some of this advice is:

1. Not to Deceive

Being deceitful with anyone and in any circumstances is something blameworthy, but even more so when it is with someone whom a person wants to work with in financial matters. Working together demands complete trust. Sometimes, someone presents themself as being qualified and aware about certain work whereas he has no such qualification and awareness. Or he presents himself as being trustworthy so that the other person puts their wealth at his disposal, whereas in his heart he seeks to betray. Or at the time of taking account, he calculates the shares of both parties in such a way that

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i. Refer to the footnote at the beginning of section 35, "The Right of Wealth." (Ed.)

the share of the other person comes out to be less than his legitimate right. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

> وَ مَنْ غَشَّ أَخَاهُ الْمُسْلِمَ نَزَعَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ بَرَكَةَ رِزْقِهِ وَ أَفْسَدَ عَلَيْهِ مَعِيشَتَهُ وَ وَكَلَهُ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ ... قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَابَا وَ أَصْلَحَا قَالَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عَلَيْهِمَا
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> "Whoever deceives his Muslim brother, Allah removes the blessings from his sustenance, ruins his way of living, and entrusts him to his own self." ... The Messenger of Allah was asked, "What if they repent and rectify their ways?" He said, "Then Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, will restore them to His grace." [i]

2. Not Accusing One's Associate

One of the factors that strengthens social relationships in financial matters is to trust one another. Thus, when one's associate performs a transaction or takes account of a transaction, then one should not refute him and accuse him of being neglectful or—in the case that a mistake has been made—accuse him of betrayal. However, such advice only holds so long as there is no clear indication of betrayal on the part of that individual.

3. Interacting with Love and Affection

Because of the nature of seeking profit that exists in financial matters, in most cases, associates are naturally at risk of being accused. To prevent a split between their souls and so that a disruption does not occur in the relationship between two brothers in faith, it has been advised that their interactions should be with love and affection. In this way, they can both attain their material benefits. For this reason, it is necessary that a person overcomes his suspicious

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol 73, p. 365, no. 30.

attitude (*sū' al-ẓann*) with respect to his associate. He must not look at his associate as an enemy who wants to overpower him and take possession of all the profit or take the capital for himself. Such an outlook will lead to disputes, conflicts, the rupture of relationships, and eventually the corruption of the wealth and the good conditions of a person's soul.

4. Helping the Associate Who Puts his Trust in You

In continuation, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if your associate trusted you, you must strive and exert efforts for him. To whatever extent possible, you must help him attain what is of benefit for him, for if you don't do this you have violated his honour. The prohibition of violating a believer's honour is like that of usury which has been introduced as waging war against Allah, in the Qur'ān. This is because, in the words of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), the sanctity of a believer is higher than the sanctity of the Ka'bah.[i] He also says:

مَنْ حَبَسَ حَقَّ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَقَامَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ خَمْسَمِائَةِ عَامٍ عَلَى رِجْلَيْهِ حَتَّى يَسِيلَ عَرَقُهُ أَوْ دَمُهُ وَ يُنَادِي مُنَادٍ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ هَذَا الظَّالِمُ الَّذِي حَبَسَ عَنِ اللَّهِ حَقَّهُ قَالَ فَيُوَبَّخُ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْماً ثُمَّ يُؤْمَرُ بِهِ إِلَى النَّارِ.

"Whoever withholds a believer's right, on the Day of Judgment Allah will make him stand on his two feet for five hundred years until his sweat or his blood flows,[ii] and a caller from Allah cries out, 'This is the oppressor who withheld the right of Allah.'" The Imam then said,

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 27, no. 95.

الْمُؤْمِنُ أَعْظَمُ حُرْمَةً مِنَ الْكَعْبَةِ

The sanctity of a believer is greater than the Ka'bah.

ii. This doubt between his sweat or his blood, is from the narrator of the tradition. (Ed.)

"He will be reprimanded for forty days and then it will be commanded that he be taken to the Fire."[i]

Thus, to fulfil the right of Allah's servitude, these *akhlāqī* responsibilities must be observed as much as possible.

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 367, no. 2.

38

THE RIGHT OF THE ADVERSARY WHO HAS A CLAIM AGAINST YOU

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْخَصْمِ الْمُدَّعِي عَلَيْكَ فَإِنْ كَانَ مَا يَدَّعِي عَلَيْكَ حَقّاً لَمْ تَنْفَسِخْ فِي حُجَّتِهِ وَ لَمْ تَعْمَلْ فِي إِبْطَالِ دَعْوَتِهِ وَ كُنْتَ خَصْمَ نَفْسِكَ لَهُ وَ الْحَاكِمَ عَلَيْهَا وَ الشَّاهِدَ لَهُ بِحَقِّهِ دُونَ شَهَادَةِ الشُّهُودِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ حَقُّ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَ إِنْ كَانَ مَا يَدَّعِيهِ بَاطِلًا رَفَقْتَ بِهِ وَ رَوَّعْتَهُ وَ نَاشَدْتَهُ بِدِينِهِ وَ كَسَرْتَ حِدَّتَهُ عَنْكَ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَ أَلْقَيْتَ حَشْوَ الْكَلَامِ وَ لَغْطَهُ الَّذِي لَا يَرُدُّ عَنْكَ عَادِيَةَ عَدُوِّكَ بَلْ تَبُوءُ بِإِثْمِهِ وَ بِهِ يَشْحَذُ عَلَيْكَ سَيْفَ عَدَاوَتِهِ لِأَنَّ لَفْظَةَ السَّوْءِ تَبْعَثُ الشَّرَّ وَ الْخَيْرُ مَقْمَعَةٌ لِلشَّرِّ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the adversary who puts forth a claim against you is that if his claim against you is true, then you must not disrupt his argument or strive to invalidate his claim. Instead, you should be an adversary against yourself, to his benefit. You should make a judgment against yourself, and be a witness for him, witnessing to the truth of his claim without him needing any other witnesses. For

> verily, that [kind of behaviour] is the right of Allah upon you. And if his claim is invalid, then treat him gently, make him alarmed [of his action], adjure him for the sake of his religion, and break his harshness through the remembrance of Allah. Refrain from unnecessary speech and speech that creates turmoil, for that does not repel the malice of your enemy, and instead will cause you to sin. Because of such talk, your enemy will sharpen his blade of enmity against you as, undoubtedly, ugly speech incites evil, whereas good speech destroys evil. And there is no strength except with Allah. [i]

THE NECESSITY OF FOLLOWING THE TRUTH

Allah has assigned certain responsibilities for a person with regards to observing the rights of His other servants. By fulfilling these responsibilities a person indicates his commitment to Allah's right of servitude. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

> جَعَلَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ حُقُوقَ عِبَادِهِ مُقَدِّمَةً لِحُقُوقِهِ فَمَنْ قَامَ بِحُقُوقِ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ كَانَ ذَلِكَ مُؤَدِّياً إِلَى الْقِيَامِ بِحُقُوقِ اللَّه
>
> Allah the Immaculate has made the rights of His servants as a prerequisite to His own rights. Therefore, whoever observes the rights of Allah's servants, then that will lead him towards observing Allah's rights. [ii]

Yet sometimes, the social and financial relationships among human beings result in enmity due to selfishness or due to a person's pursuing various types of interests, such as individual interests, family interests, or the interests of his own friends. In these situations, there are responsibilities on a person's shoulders which mostly have legal dimensions to them, and their penal laws have been mentioned in

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 268.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 4780.

the discussions regarding *qadā'* (judgment).[i] In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has mentioned some general instances of these responsibilities. In the beginning, he says that the right of someone who has enmity towards you and has a claim against you is that if his claim is true, then do not neglect it and do not try to make his claim appear invalid.

If a person moves forward on the path of comprehending the truth, acting upon it, and fulfilling the rights of Allah's servants in accordance with what Allah and His *awliyā'* have said, then undoubtedly Allah will make him successful. Allah will give him success in acting on the truth and will also make the truth clear for him, just as it truly is. As Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِالْحَقِّ نَجَا

Whoever acts according to the truth, succeeds.[ii]

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِالْحَقِّ غَنِم

Whoever acts according to the truth, attains benefit.[iii]

This is because acting according to the truth is very difficult and bitter. He also says:

مَنْ كَانَ مَقْصَدُهُ الْحَقَّ أَدْرَكَهُ وَ لَوْ كَانَ كَثِيرَ اللَّبْس

Whoever's aim is [to comprehend and attain] the truth, he shall attain it even if it is very obscure.[iv]

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i. A reference to the chapters of Islamic jurisprudence that discuss matters such as: who can be a judge, how the plaintiff must prove his claim, how the defendant can defend himself, witnessing in court, confessing, the punishments for specific crimes, and so on. In traditional books of Islamic jurisprudence these discussions would fall under the chapters of *qaḍā'*, *shahādāt*, *iqrār*, *ḥudūd*, *qiṣāṣ*, and *diyāt*. (Ed.)

ii. Ibid., no. 7739.

iii. Ibid., no. 7650.

iv. Ibid., no. 9024.

THE SPECIAL IMPORTANCE OF FULFILLING THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

Keeping the aforementioned points in mind, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that a person should honestly examine the claim being made against him and consider: is it true or not? Regardless of whether the other person is his child, his spouse, someone lower than him in terms of their social status, or someone younger than him with respect to age, if the claim was correct, then he should accept it and fulfil the right of the claimant. The Imam says that if you do not do this and do not accept his right, then you have made him your enemy. It is possible a person can mislead another individual and consequently, trample upon someone's rights. However, these rights will not always remain trampled upon. On the Day of Judgment, the Divine court of absolute justice will be established and truth and falsehood as well as their followers will be separated from one another. Moreover, even before this, the system of Divine governance reveals the truth in this world. If such an individual does not repent and does not give the claimant his due rights, then as Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says, Allah makes that oppression apparent within him or his wealth.[i]

If a person moves along a path of invalidating and denying others the rights that they deserve, then he has become an enemy of himself. He will be stopped in the realm of *barzakh* and on the Day of Resurrection and he will face great difficulty. As Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَقِفُوهُمْ إِنَّهُم مَّسْئُولُونَ

> [But first] stop them! For they must be questioned. (37:24)

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 72, p. 331, no. 64.

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَظْلِمُ بِمَظْلِمَةٍ إِلَّا أَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا فِي نَفْسِهِ أَوْ مَالِهِ ...

There is no one who commits an act of oppression except that Allah takes him to account in his own self or his wealth...

It is possible that if such a person truly repents, Allah will forgive His own right that is directly related to Him.[i] But it is only with great difficulty that He will forgive the rights of others. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ أَكَلَ مَالَ أَخِيهِ ظُلْماً وَ لَمْ يَرُدَّهُ إِلَيْهِ أَكَلَ جَذْوَةً مِنَ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

> Whoever unjustly consumes the wealth of his brother and does not return it to him, then he will eat a burning piece of fire on the Day of Judgment.[ii]

According to narrations, even those who tread the path of truth, fight the enemies of Allah, and are martyred on this path, are no exception. If people held rights over them, they will also be stopped. As is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

يُغْفَرُ لِلشَّهِيْدِ كُلُّ ذَنْبٍ إِلَّا الدَّيْنَ

All the sins of a martyr are forgiven except his debt.[iii]

This is because that requires the permission and satisfaction of the creditor. Although, it is possible that after some stages, Allah obtains that permission for him.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING ONE'S CONSCIENCE ALIVE

The religion of Islam desires that—before he is even brought to court and made to stand trial—the internal system of judgment

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i. Ibid., vol. 72, p. 331, no. 64.

... وَ أَمَّا الظُّلْمُ الَّذِي بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا تَابَ غَفَرَ لَه

... But as for the oppression that is between a person and Allah, if he repents for it, Allah will forgive him.

ii. Ibid., vol. 72, p. 331, no. 66.

iii. al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, no 10662.

within a person should pronounce the verdict with regards to the rights of others that are on his shoulders. In reality, if this desire of Islam had been realized, the courts would undoubtedly be empty, and no one would have to refer to them.

Nonetheless, for the purpose of preventing disputes, the *sharī'ah* has taken various affairs into account and has presented a solution for each of them. It has strived that by means of *akhlāqī* reminders and admonitions, a person's innate nature should develop and be enlivened so that he acts in accordance with this innate and truth-seeking disposition. Also, the *sharī'ah* has dealt with judicial matters to legally deal with those who are not like this and still wish to trample upon the rights of others. Issues such as fines and penalties, imprisonment, and exile, apply in such circumstances. It is for this reason that Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), in these sayings, mentions legal issues amid *akhlāqī* issues. Doing so ensures that these teachings always remain ingrained in society and that people are aware of them and of the significance of these rights. Before referring to the judicial court, people should strive to fulfil these rights themselves because if they to go to court, their social and familial prestige will be tarnished.

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if your adversary is speaking the truth and you fulfil his rights, then in reality, you have fulfilled Allah's right. This is because the right of a believer stems from Allah's right.

Most disputes are the result of ignorance regarding the rights of others, although at times they are due to the rebellion and domination of a person's selfish desires. Therefore, a person should always display an appropriate reaction that is in accordance with the *akhlāqī* rules. A person may think that if he escapes from a dispute by trampling upon the rights of the other person with whom the truth lies, then he has escaped for good. However, the reality of the matter is not like that. Allah has created this system of existence such that it is moving in a certain manner, if a person does not pay heed or does not repent, then he will eventually be disgraced one day. And

what is most astonishing is that he will be disgraced in a way which he never anticipated.

GENTLENESS AND TOLERANCE WHEN TAKING ONE'S RIGHT

In continuation, the Imam (peace be upon him) says that if that if the claiust's claim against you is false, then as much as is possible, be tolerant with him. In this way, exhibit your piety and your devotion to the religion when you interact with him. Meaning, do something that will enliven his conscience and his innate nature, to whatever extent possible.

Those who are on the side of falsehood have a harsher approach when interacting with those who are with the truth. Through this harshness, they want to present themselves as being on the side of truth so that they may reach their goal. Thus, they may even use harsh and abusive language. In such circumstances, those who are on the side of truth should not flee the scene and should not quickly submit, for submission to oppression is itself a means of strengthening oppression. Rather, they must act in a way that the dormant conscience, stemming from the other person's humanity or his faith, can be awakened. As the Imam says, break his harshness with the help of Allah's remembrance.

The Noble Qur'ān has a subtle expression regarding those disbelievers who used to prevent the Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) from praying:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَىٰ عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّىٰ ... أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ

> Tell me, he who forbids a servant when he prays [is he not deserving of the Divine punishment?] ... Does he not know that Allah sees [all his actions]? (96:9-14)

This last sentence is very subtle, "Does he not know that Allah sees?" Allah wants to awaken the innate nature of this polytheist by making him pay attention to Allah's knowledge of a person's actions and behaviour. Remembering Allah is manifested in different ways,

for example by paying attention to the Day of Resurrection, to death, or by using other means. These instances are different ways to deal with the harshness of people because Allah's remembrance causes a person's heart to be reassured and attain tranquillity.

By means of Allah's remembrance, the other party may abandon their excessive and futile speech and control their behaviour. One who is enraged is overpowered by his selfish desires and Shayṭān then takes the reins of this person's affairs into his own hands, provoking him to commit various acts. For example, accusing someone else with regards to financial matters or immodest actions are some of Shayṭān's tools that he incites a person to do. However, if a person sees that the other party's behaviour with him is based on *akhlāq* and in accordance with Allah's servitude, then he is prevented from committing those wrong actions and speech that he may have done. In this way, he will have avoided sinning and the sword of his enmity will be blunted.

THE CONDUCT OF THE AHL AL-BAYT (PEACE BE UPON THEM) IN DEALING WITH THE IMPUDENCE OF THE OPPONENTS

In the conduct of the infallible Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and their interactions with their enemies, we witness this type of behaviour. Of course, when others would interact with them there was generally no financial or legal animosity in the picture. Rather, their enemies sought to corrupt the thinking of ignorant people to make them take a stance against the Ahl al-Bayt. As a result, these ignorant people used to interact with the Ahl al-Bayt in accordance with this wrong mentality and even use foul language with them.

Once an individual rudely said to Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him), "You are a *baqar* (cow) [meaning that your title, al-Bāqir is derived from the word baqar]!" The Imam said, "No, I am *bāqir* (the one who splits)." The man then disrespected the Imam's mother. The Imam said:

إِنْ كُنْتَ صَدَقْتَ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهَا وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ كَذَبْتَ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَكَ

If you are speaking the truth, then may Allah forgive my mother. But if you are lying, then may Allah forgive you.[i]

If someone has a friendly relationship with his friend and tolerates some of his deviant actions, although this behaviour is good, it is not something outstanding. That which is important is that a person behaves with his enemy in such a way that after some time, he becomes a friend and a supporter of the truth, just as the conduct of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) was. The Imams not only guided others through their conduct, but they also wanted to attract those who had gone down the wrong path, towards the straight path. This is a very important and great task, that an ignorant individual admits his mistake and his animosity is transformed into friendship.

THE ROLE OF ETIQUETTE AND LOGICAL REASONING IN DISPUTES

Most situations of antagonism and differences are not the result of enmity, rather, they generally stem from misunderstandings and mistakes. Human beings are not infallible, they are prone to make mistakes. Even someone who does not intentionally want to oppose his religious responsibilities, may sometimes—inadvertently or accidentally—become suspicious of others (have *sū' al-ẓann*) in his social relationships. This then prepares the grounds for disputes and hostility to arise and can result in harsh behaviour and the use of abusive language between him and the other person. In such circumstances, Islam's advice is that in all one's affairs in life, even when dealing with a claimant who is acting with harshness, Islamic and human etiquette must be maintained. One should never employ evil tactics in response to another's behaviour, be it good or evil.

If the claim being made by the claimant is true, then this true claim should be presented and explained in a beautiful manner. He

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 46, p. 289, no. 12.

should speak clearly and in an unambiguous fashion because many a conflict arises due to ambiguities in the claim being made. Even if someone has a true claim against their own father and the father does not accept it, then he can lodge a complaint against him with firmness and determination. However, as Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says, he must not raise his voice over his father's.[i]

Someone against whom a claim has been made naturally dislikes accepting that claim and admitting that the truth is with the other person. Therefore, if this claim is not presented correctly, then it is possible that his denial will intensify and as a result, the hostility between both parties will continue. If we put ourselves in the position of the other person, then to some extent, we can comprehend this point. The human's nature is such that he rarely agrees to accept that he caused a problem for someone else or that he has a shortcoming with respect to the other person. He always thinks that he is perfect in his relationships with others and that there are no shortcomings or negligence on his part. That's why it has been said that one's behaviour must be tender, so that the difficulty and burden of the claim become easier for the other person to bear. When necessary, to strengthen one's claim, one should bring forward evidence and logically present the prerequisites to their argument. One should make use of evidence pertaining to the place and time or bring forward people who have witnessed the incident so that the other party becomes ready to accept the claim.

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i. al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. 27, pp. 304-305, no. 1-2. The second of the two narrations, both of which are similar, is brought below. (Ed.)

عَنِ الْحَكَمِ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع إِنَّ وَالِدِي تَصَدَّقَ عَلَيَّ بِدَارٍ ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُ أَنْ يَرْجِعَ فِيهَا إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ فَقَالَ بِئْسَ مَا صَنَعَ وَالِدُكَ فَإِنْ أَنْتَ خَاصَمْتَهُ فَلَا تَرْفَعْ عَلَيْهِ صَوْتَكَ وَ إِنْ رَفَعَ صَوْتَهُ فَاخْفِضْ أَنْتَ صَوْتَكَ الْحَدِيثَ.

Ḥakam said, "I said to Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), 'Verily my father gifted a house to me, then it occurred to him that he would take it back.'" [Ḥakam continued] until he said, "The Imam said, 'Wretched is what your father has done! But if you dispute with him, then do not raise your voice over his. And if he raises his voice, then you lower your voice.'"

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says to try to present the argument and reasoning with gentleness and tolerance, with a particular order, by using the clearest expressions and the gentlest words. All this is so that, if the other person has the potential to accept the claim, then he will be influenced and return to the path of truth. The Imam also says to be careful that futile and argumentative speech should not make you neglectful of logical reasoning, because it is your reasoning that will convince him, not engaging in argument.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING AWARE OF AND ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ETIQUETTES OF DEBATE

One of the ways for a person to achieve success in academic matters is that—during his studies and discussions—he should not confuse different topics with one another, because the method of one science is different from another. As per historical reports, one of the reasons why people became inclined towards Sophism and Sophistic thinking was this very fact. A group of people whose profession was that they were defence lawyers, would engage in debates and use any means necessary to prove the truth of their clients. With fallacious arguments, they were able to make the truth appear false, and falsehood appear to be the truth. This work of theirs gradually resulted in people doubting the very possibility of ever reaching the truth and its distinction from falsehood.

The Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) have told us to establish the truth by using the truth whenever we engage in debates, and to not argue by using falsehood! At certain times, when it becomes necessary for a person to engage in debate, they have instructed that it should be, 'the best manner of dispute'.[i] Disputing in the best manner means that, for the purpose of proving the truth, a person makes uses of common matters and arguments that the opposing party also agrees with. The arguments and debates of the prophets

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i. Qur'ān 16:125.

of Allah were based on this 'best manner of dispute.' However, one ought to recognize this fact that not everybody is qualified to engage in this 'best manner of dispute' when it comes to issues of belief. Rather, the person doing so should be an expert, have experience, and have a strong ability to anticipate where the debate is heading.

One day, someone from Syria requested Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) that he discuss the issue of imāmah with him. Some of the students of the Imam were also present and they noticed that the Imam was waiting for someone. When Hishām ibn Ḥakam, who was the youngest among all of them, entered the gathering, the Imam said:

نَاصِرُنَا بِقَلْبِهِ وَ لِسَانِهِ وَ يَدِه

[Welcome to he who is] our helper with his heart, his tongue, and his hand.

The Imam first appointed other companions to debate on his behalf, but the Syrian was not convinced in certain matters. Then the Imam told him to debate with Hishām. Eventually, Hishām was able to prove the truth to him. At that point, the Imam turned to one of his companions and said:

تَكْسِرُ بَاطِلًا بِبَاطِلٍ

You try to defeat falsehood [and prove the truth] by means of falsehood.

To another companion, he said:

أَنْتَ وَ الْأَحْوَلُ قَفَّازَانِ حَاذِقَان

You and [the other companion named] al-Aḥwal are well-versed at jumping [but not at landing].

But to Hishām ibn Ḥakam he said:

يَا هِشَامُ لَا تَكَادُ تَقَعُ تَلْوِي رِجْلَيْكَ إِذَا هَمَسْتَ بِالْأَرْضِ طِرْتَ مِثْلُكَ فَلْيُكَلِّمِ النَّاسَ

> O Hishām! The moment you are going to alight, you bend up your legs [like a bird who is landing]. Just as you are going to hit the ground, you fly up.[i] Those like you should discuss with the people.

In the end, the Imam also made an *akhlāqī* statement to train and remind Hishām, saying:

فَاتَّقِ الزَّلَّةَ

Be careful that you do not stumble.[ii]

Meaning, do not consider this ability to be from yourself. Allah has given it to you, consider it as a blessing from Him.

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i. In these beautiful words, the Imam (peace be upon him) has used a metaphor of a bird to illustrate how Hishām always had a response ready and would never be defeated in debate. (Ed.)

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 173

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THE RIGHT OF THE ADVERSARY AGAINST WHOM YOU HAVE A CLAIM

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْخَصْمِ الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ مَا تَدَّعِيهِ حَقّاً أَجْمَلْتَ فِي مُقَاوَلَتِهِ بِمَخْرَجِ الدَّعْوَى فَإِنَّ لِلدَّعْوَى غِلْظَةً فِي سَمْعِ الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ وَ قَصَدْتَ قَصْدَ حُجَّتِكَ بِالرِّفْقِ وَ أَمْهَلِ الْمُهْلَةِ وَ أَبْيَنِ الْبَيَانِ وَ أَلْطَفِ اللُّطْفِ وَ لَمْ تَتَشَاغَلْ عَنْ حُجَّتِكَ بِمُنَازَعَتِهِ بِالْقِيلِ وَ الْقَالِ فَتَذْهَبَ عَنْكَ حُجَّتُكَ وَ لَا يَكُونَ لَكَ فِي ذَلِكَ دَرَكٌ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the adversary against whom you have a claim is that, if your claim is true, then speak nicely when conversing with him about it. For indeed a claim is something rough [and it is difficult] for the one whom it is against, to hear it. Seek [to discuss] your argument with tenderness, by granting the most respite, by speaking in the clearest manner, and by exhibiting the most graceful behaviour. Do not preoccupy yourself from presenting your reasoning by engaging in conflict with him such that your argument is lost and there is no way to compensate

for it. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE MANNER OF DEALING WITH ONE'S ADVERSARY

The holy religion of Islam and the luminous commandments and conduct of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) allow a person to attain his desired purpose, which is to fulfil the great right of Allah. These teachings and commandments are so complete and comprehensive that they even advise a person regarding how to deal with someone he has a financial conflict with! In such a situation, we have been advised to follow the truth and reality, so that no oppression takes place and so that no one's right is neglected.

1. Speaking Nicely

Fundamentally, the faculty of speech is so that a person can express himself, his wants, and his internal states. As much as this is done in accordance with the correct criteria and logic, the points will be conveyed and understood in the best manner. For this reason, the Noble Qur'ān advises as follows:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

And speak to people good [words] (2:83)

The scope of good speech, due to various scenarios and different people, is extremely vast. On the other hand, one of the simple and quick causes of a person's stumbling and oppressing others lies in his tongue. Thus, controlling it is very important and difficult and Islam—for the purpose of training a person—is very sensitive with regards to the actions of this body part. This is because these actions leave a considerable effect on the character of the individual and the society. This sensitivity is to such an extent that even when it comes to confronting those who do not possess the same religion, path, and beliefs, the Qur'ān says the following about debating and presenting

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 268.

arguments for invalidating their beliefs:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

Do not argue with the *ahl al-kitāb* except in a manner which is best. (29:46)

2. Appreciating the Difficulty of Accepting the Truth

Even though the human has been created such that he seeks the truth, one of his innate inclinations is self-centredness and this naturally overshadows his truth-seeking nature. Thus, after becoming aware and comprehending the truth in every matter, it is difficult to accept it, submit to it, and act upon it. However, the real believers have readied their souls to accept the truth. They accept it despite the outward difficulties that may arise; they do not hold back expending any efforts with respect to it. The Noble Qur'ān says regarding some of the Ahl al-Kitāb:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ أَن يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ

When they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you see their eyes fill with tears because of the truth that they recognize. They say, "Our Lord, we believe; so, write us down among the witnesses. Why should we not believe in Allah and the truth that has come to us, eager as we are that our Lord should admit us among the righteous people?" (5:83-84)

3. Soft and Logical Speech with One's Adversary

One of the instances of good speech is to speak with others in a deliberated manner and after reflection. This method protects a

person from stumbling and speaking futile words, especially with someone against whom he has a claim. If a person deals with his adversary with harshness and without thinking, then the rightful logic of his argument will be reproached and hidden due to his anger. Moreover, by exposing his own weak point, he gives an excuse to the other person to react in the same manner. For this reason, Allah advises Prophet Mūsā and Hārūn (peace be upon them) to confront His biggest enemy, Fir'awn, as follows:

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ

> Speak to him in a soft manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear. (20:44)

In this regard, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that you should try to speak with softness and tranquillity so that you are able to present your arguments in the clearest manner, so that the pleasant nature of your words is manifested, and so that it attracts the adversary, those around him, and his supporters. This will compel them to also employ reasoning and thinking. On the other hand, be vigilant to refrain from words that are futile and unrelated to the topic of the conflict. Such words will bring about your loss and you will not have a chance to compensate this. Moreover, you will give your adversary an excuse to now bring a claim against you and drag you to court.

Observing these rights yields benefits with regards to the legal proceedings in court, it helps control the soul's rebellion so that it does not stray from the *akhlāqī* and *shar'ī* limits, and it also protects the reputation of the adversary. Perhaps he made a mistake in matters pertaining to his finances, his family, or his prestige and by means of this *akhlāqī* behaviour, he will be admonished, confesses to the truth, accept it, and be free of the unfortunate outcomes—in this world and the hereafter—of denying the rights of others.

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THE RIGHT OF ONE WHO SEEKS COUNSEL

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُسْتَشِيرِ فَإِنْ حَضَرَكَ لَهُ وَجْهُ رَأْيٍ جَهَدْتَ لَهُ فِي النَّصِيحَةِ وَ أَشَرْتَ عَلَيْهِ بِمَا تَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ لَوْ كُنْتَ مَكَانَهُ عَمِلْتَ بِهِ وَ ذَلِكَ لِيَكُنْ مِنْكَ فِي رَحْمَةٍ وَ لِينٍ فَإِنَّ اللِّينَ يُؤْنِسُ الْوَحْشَةَ وَ إِنَّ الْغِلَظَ يُوحِشُ مَوْضِعَ الْأُنْسِ وَ إِنْ لَمْ يَحْضُرْكَ لَهُ رَأْيٌ وَ عَرَفْتَ لَهُ مَنْ تَثِقُ بِرَأْيِهِ وَ تَرْضَى بِهِ لِنَفْسِكَ دَلَلْتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ أَرْشَدْتَهُ إِلَيْهِ فَكُنْتَ لَمْ تَأْلُهُ خَيْراً وَ لَمْ تَدَّخِرْهُ نُصْحاً وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the one who seeks your counsel is that if you have a good opinion to give him, then endeavour and take pains to sincerely advise him. Suggest for him that which you know you would have done had you been in his place. And that [giving of advice and suggesting] should be done with mercy and softness, for indeed, estrangement is changed into intimacy because of softness, whereas intimacy is changed into estrangement because of being rough and harsh. However, if you do not have any opinion for him but you know someone else whose opinion you trust

> and who you would be pleased with for yourself, then guide him to that individual. By doing so, you would not have neglected him nor withheld any advice from him. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

Because this right discusses the legal and *akhlāqī* responsibilities of a counsellor with respect to someone who seeks his counsel, we will explain the traits of a counsellor. However, prior to that it is necessary to discuss the place and importance of seeking counsel in Islam.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING COUNSEL

Allah has created the human in such a way that to reach the entirety of what he desires he must utilize his intellect. He must use it exclusively without it being tainted and overshadowed. However, by himself the human cannot comprehend all the realities and attain the entirety of what he desires. For this reason, he needs the assistance of others on this path, and this need can be obtained in two ways. Firstly, by seeking knowledge from scholars in academic matters and general teachings. These could pertain to the origin, the resurrection, or the path for the human to reach his lofty goal by virtue of Divine teachings. Secondly, by seeking the counsel of qualified counsellors with regards to how he can live a life that is in accordance with the intellect and the *sharī'ah*. Such advice could be sought with regards to all the different dimensions of life. In the perspective of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, counselling and seeking guidance is extremely important. So much so that Allah says to the Complete Intellect, that is the Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

> And consult them [the people] in the affairs! (3:159)

And He also says to the believers:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 269.

وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

And [they conduct] their affairs by counsel among themselves (42:38)

Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ شَاوَرَ الرِّجَالَ شَارَكَهَا فِي عُقُولِهَا

Whoever seeks the counsel of men has shared in their intellect.[i]

The reason for this is that the opinion of the counsellor is pure, whereas the opinion of the one seeking counsel is mixed with his own desires.[ii] Thus, seeking counsel naturally causes a person to come out of a state of self-regard, self-admiration, ignorance, and egotism.

TRAITS OF A COUNSELLOR

1. Being Aware

He must be aware and understand the matter about which he is giving counsel, so that he does not encourage someone towards ignorance. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

خَيْرُ مَنْ شَاوَرْتَ ذَوُو النُّهَى وَ الْعِلْمِ وَ أُولُو التَّجَارِبِ وَ الْحَزْمِ

The best people you can seek counsel from are those who possess an intellect, knowledge, experience, and far-sightedness.[iii]

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 8652.

ii. Ibid., no. 3907.

إِنَّمَا حُضَّ عَلَى الْمُشَاوَرَةِ لِأَنَّ رَأْيَ الْمُشِيرِ صِرْفٌ وَ رَأْيَ الْمُسْتَشِيرِ مَشُوبٌ بِالْهَوَى

Verily, seeking counsel has only been encouraged because the opinion of the counsellor is pure and unmixed, while the opinion of the one seeking counsel is mixed with his desire.

iii. Ibid., no. 4990.

2. Having Sympathy and Seeking Good

Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ نَصَحَ مُسْتَشِيرَهُ صَلَحَ تَدْبِيرُه

One who sincerely advises [and seeks good for] the one who seeks his counsel, his plan will be good and appropriate.[i]

3. Having an Intellect and Insight

The role of the intellect is to uncover reality. It is possible someone has sufficient information about a matter, but for certain reasons it is not in the interests of the one who seeks his counsel that he mentions whatever he knows. Even though the counsellor may sympathetically seek what is best by mentioning this, it is still unadvisable. In such a situation, it is the intellect that recognizes this matter and gives counsel in a manner that is in the best interests of the one seeking counsel. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنِ اسْتَشَارَ الْعَاقِلَ مَلَك

Whoever seeks the counsel of an intellectual person, will dominate [over the matter].[ii]

4. Being God-Fearing

Having this state results in a person saying the reality of the matter, and if he does not know this then he does not misguide the other person. Rather, he guides him to someone else who knows. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

شَاوِرْ فِي أُمُورِكَ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ اللَّهَ تَرْشُد

In your affairs, consult those who fear Allah and you will

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i. Ibid., no. 8046.

ii. Ibid., no. 7770.

be guided.[i]

5. Being Humble

This state causes someone to not withhold that which is in the interests of the one seeking counsel. A humble person will willingly pass on whatever information is necessary, and if he doesn't know something he will guide the person seeking counsel to someone else who can counsel them. This is as opposed to an arrogant person who would not want to share his opinions with others, and if he didn't know something, he would not guide others to a capable counsellor.

6. Not being a Coward, Stingy or Greedy

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said to 'Alī (peace be upon him):

يَا عَلِيُّ لَا تُشَاوِرْ جَبَاناً فَإِنَّهُ يُضَيِّقُ عَلَيْكَ الْمَخْرَجَ وَ لَا تُشَاوِرِ الْبَخِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ يَقْصُرُ بِكَ عَنْ غَايَتِكَ وَ لَا تُشَاوِرْ حَرِيصاً فَإِنَّهُ يُزَيِّنُ لَكَ شَرَهاً

> O Ali! Do not seek the counsel of a coward for verily he will make the way out [appear] narrow for you. And do not seek the counsel of a stingy person, for verily he will hold you back from your objective. And do not seek the advice of a greedy person, for verily he will beautify for you his greed [he will display the reality in an upside-down manner].[ii]

THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO SEEKS COUNSEL

Bearing in mind the traits of a counsellor, if someone sees these traits within himself, the human conscience and the *sharī'ah* dictate that he has a responsibility to convey whatever is in the best interests

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i. Ibid., no. 5756.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *'Ilal al-sharā'i'*, vol. 2, p. 559, no. 1.

of the one who seeks his counsel. In this regard, Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

ظُلْمُ الْمُسْتَشِيرِ ظُلْمٌ وَ خِيَانَة

To oppress one who seeks your counsel is oppression and treachery.[i]

This oppression includes not giving counsel at all, when the conditions for it are present, as well as giving incorrect counsel, when the counsellor himself recognizes that the content of his advice is incorrect.

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that if you have a response to give when counselling, then take pains to be sympathetic and say that which you would have acted on if you were in the place of the one seeking counsel. Moreover, say it with softness and kindness, for relationships that are with softness cause intimacy and remove any kind of estrangement. On the other hand, harshness causes a split in relationships and removes the intimacy. If you do not know the answer but you know someone else who does know this answer, then guide the one who seeks your counsel to him. Of course, this is only if you have confidence in him, such that if you yourself needed counselling you would have sought it from him.

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 6037.

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THE RIGHT OF THE COUNSELLOR

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُشِيرِ عَلَيْكَ فَلَا تَتَّهِمْهُ فِيمَا لَا يُوَافِقُكَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رَأْيِهِ إِذَا أَشَارَ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ الْآرَاءُ وَ تَصَرُّفُ النَّاسِ فِيهَا وَ اخْتِلَافُهُمْ فَكُنْ عَلَيْهِ فِي رَأْيِهِ بِالْخِيَارِ إِذَا اتَّهَمْتَ رَأْيَهُ فَأَمَّا تُهَمَتُهُ فَلَا تَجُوزُ لَكَ إِذَا كَانَ عِنْدَكَ مِمَّنْ يَسْتَحِقُّ الْمُشَاوَرَةَ وَ لَا تَدَعْ شُكْرَهُ عَلَى مَا بَدَا لَكَ مِنْ إِشْخَاصِ رَأْيِهِ وَ حُسْنِ وَجْهِ مَشُورَتِهِ فَإِذَا وَافَقَكَ حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ وَ قَبِلْتَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَخِيكَ بِالشُّكْرِ وَ الْإِرْصَادِ بِالْمُكَافَأَةِ فِي مِثْلِهَا إِنْ فَزِعَ إِلَيْكَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of your counsellor is that when he guides you to an opinion that does not conform with your own, do not accuse him. For verily, these are various opinions, people act independently and differ with regards to them. So, you are free to choose his opinion [or not]. If you accuse his opinion [and accuse him], while according to you he was someone worthy of counselling, then this is prohibited. Do not cease to thank him for what he did for you by giving you his opinion and counselling you well. And if he [gave you counsel that] conformed with

you, then praise Allah, accept that from your brother with gratitude, and await the opportunity to recompense him when he takes refuge in you. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNSELLING

In his social relationships, a person must revolve around the axis of following the intellect. By doing so he will attain beneficial effects and outcomes in this world and in the hereafter. This intellect is either the intellect of the person himself or the collective intellect which is referred to as counselling.

Counselling is one of the necessities of human life. The human has been placed in society such that, to fulfil his needs, his own individual resources do not suffice. Despite his own faculties of intellection and contemplation, it is still necessary that he seeks counsel from those who are qualified. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

حَقٌّ عَلَى الْعَاقِلِ أَنْ يُضِيفَ إِلَى رَأْيِهِ رَأْيَ الْعُقَلَاءِ وَ يَضُمَّ إِلَى عِلْمِهِ عُلُومَ الْحُكَمَاءِ

It behoves the intelligent one to add the opinion of the intelligent people to his opinion and to merge the knowledge of the wise with his knowledge.[ii]

This matter is of so much importance that the Imam says:

اسْتَشِرْ عَدُوَّكَ الْعَاقِلَ وَ احْذَرْ رَأْيَ صَدِيقِكَ الْجَاهِلِ

Consult your intelligent enemy and be wary of the opinion of your ignorant friend.[iii]

This is because the intellect itself rectifies the person's situation. As opposed to ignorance, even if it comes from the person's friend.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 269.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 4920.

iii. Ibid., no. 2471.

Thus, he also says:

مُشَاوَرَةُ الْجَاهِلِ الْمُشْفِقِ خَطَر

Consulting the ignorant person who is concerned for you is dangerous.[i]

مُشَاوَرَةُ الْحَازِمِ الْمُشْفِقِ ظَفَر

Consulting the judicious person who is concerned for you is a [means of attaining] triumph.[ii]

Therefore, a counsellor ought to have certain attributes, some of which were presented in the previous section. As a result of possessing these attributes, and due to also keeping away from attributes that are unworthy for a counsellor, he acquires rights on the one who seeks his counsel.

THE RIGHTS OF THE COUNSELLOR

1. Refraining from Accusing Him

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that one of the pillars of counselling is that the person seeking counsel should not have formed his conclusion from beforehand. It should not be the case that if the counsellor mentions something contrary to his pre-conceived opinion, he will not accept it and rather he will only accept that which conforms with his view. If the conditions and attributes of the counsellor have been ascertained for the person, then he ought to trust him and accept whatever he mentions.

At the same time, people have differences in their opinions and views. They comprehend things differently and make different assessments regarding reality. It is thus understood by rational and reasonable people that if the counsellor presents a view, the person can choose to act on it or not. However, he does not have the right to

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i. Ibid., no. 9859.

ii. Ibid., no. 9858.

unfairly accuse the counsellor, accusing him, for example, of seeking to gain personal benefit. The person must realize that one day he will be called to account for this.

2. Gratitude

When the person has benefitted from counselling and received guidance, the counsellor then has a right on him which must be fulfilled. This right is that he should be thanked and should receive the person's gratitude, for he has directed a person to the highest of blessings, that is guidance. This guidance could be in material or spiritual matters, for example it could be academic guidance, guidance regarding a profession or marriage. Regardless, a person should always be thankful to his counsellor.

One who does not thank the servants of Allah has in fact not thanked Allah either. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says in another narration:

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى لِعَبْدٍ مِنْ عَبِيدِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَ شَكَرْتَ فُلَاناً فَيَقُولُ بَلْ شَكَرْتُكَ يَا رَبِّ فَيَقُولُ لَمْ تَشْكُرْنِي إِذْ لَمْ تَشْكُرْهُ

> On the Day of Judgment, Allah says to a servant from among His servants, "Did you thank so-and-so?" He says, "Rather, I thanked You, my lord." He says, "You have not thanked Me, since you did not thank him."[i]

In particular, counselling and guiding have a special connection with Allah. Hence, by thanking the servant of Allah in this way, Allah has in a sense, been thanked too.

3. Recompensing Him with Goodness

When a person attains the desired outcome due to the guidance of his counsellor, he should seek to recompense this and should

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 99, no. 30.

express thanks and gratitude in an appropriate manner. Thankfulness has different types and levels. Its first level is to thank with words, while the second level is to thank with one's actions. This means that a person must always pay attention to the good that others do for him. If one day that person himself requires counsel or any other assistance and it is in one's ability to help them, then they must do so. One should not withhold giving sincere guidance or helping the one who had earlier done good to him, even if it be through an intermediary.

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THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO SEEKS ADVICE

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُسْتَنْصِحِ فَإِنَّ حَقَّهُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إِلَيْهِ النَّصِيحَةَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الَّذِي تَرَى لَهُ أَنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ وَ تَخْرُجَ الْمَخْرَجَ الَّذِي يَلِينُ عَلَى مَسَامِعِهِ وَ تُكَلِّمَهُ مِنَ الْكَلَامِ بِمَا يُطِيقُهُ عَقْلُهُ فَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ عَقْلٍ طَبَقَةً مِنَ الْكَلَامِ يَعْرِفُهُ وَ يَجْتَنِبُهُ وَ لْيَكُنْ مَذْهَبُكَ الرَّحْمَةَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And as for the right of the one who seeks advice, verily his right is that you convey advice to him in a correct manner [to the extent] that you know he will accept, you utter that which is soft on his ears, and you speak to him with speech that his intellect can endure. Because undoubtedly, for every intellect there is a level of speech that it recognizes and accepts. And your course of action with him should be [accompanied with] mercy. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 269.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ADVICE AND COUNSEL

One of the common aspects of advice and counsel is that sympathy must be shown to the one who seeks advice and counsel, and there must be a sincere desire to give him the best. However, counselling usually pertains to worldly matters and hardships when the person seeks to benefit from the counsellor's opinion. Secondly, counselling is initiated by the one who seeks counsel and brings about a type of responsibility on the counsellor. However, advice is more general. It includes worldly matters as well as matters of the hereafter, and it is initiated by the adviser. Thus, when the appropriate conditions are met, it places a responsibility on the person who is being advised. This is regardless of whether the advice is about an intellectual responsibility, a *shar'ī* responsibility, or an *akhlāqī* one.

THE IMPORTANCE AND EXCELLENCE OF ADVISING

The human has been created as a being that seeks perfection and accepts it. Allah has readied the means for the human to reach material and spiritual perfection, both in the outer world as well as within his own existence. One of these important means is to benefit from the guidance and sympathy of those who are qualified, because by itself, the human's intellect and thinking is not sufficient in this regard. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

لَا خَيْرَ فِي قَوْمٍ لَيْسُوا بِنَاصِحِينَ وَ لَا يُحِبُّونَ النَّاصِحِين

There is no good in a community that does not admonish and does not love those who admonish.[i]

If the intellect and faith are manifested in someone, then they will not allow him to be indifferent with regards to rectifying others. After seeking to reform his own affairs and having sympathy towards his own state, he will also have a deep concern about rectifying the

i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 10884.

affairs of his fellow human beings. Just as Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

> يَجِبُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ النَّصِيحَةُ لَهُ فِي الْمَشْهَدِ وَ الْمَغِيب
>
> It is obligatory on a believer that he gives advice to [and sympathizes with] a believer, both in his presence and his absence.[i]

This act should not be considered as interfering in others' affairs, rather it is the necessary consequence of attaining a befitting human and Divine life. It is necessary that people pay attention to one another, seeking to help each other rectify their affairs and states. Just as how the Noble Qur'ān explains this to be the responsibility of the Divine prophets, at the first stage of their mission.[ii] For this reason, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

> إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ مَنْزِلَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْشَاهُمْ فِي أَرْضِهِ بِالنَّصِيحَةِ لِخَلْقِه
>
> Verily the greatest of people on the Day of Judgment—in terms of their station with Allah—are the one who walked through His land more than the others, seeking to give advice to His creation.[iii]

Therefore, one of the responsibilities of Allah's servitude is that a person advises others towards goodness and righteousness. If he does not do so, then this indicates a defect in his servitude.

QUALITIES OF REAL ADVICE

For advice to have a true effect, one must pay attention to its qualities. In this way, the advice can have its desired effect, and the

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 208, no. 2.

ii. Qur'ān 7:62, 7:68, 7:79, and 7:93.

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 208, no. 5.

difference between real and fake advice can be understood so that people are not deceived by fake advice.

1. Exhibiting the Truth

One who seeks the truth should not neglect mentioning the truth to anybody else. In all places and at all times, he explains the truth and defends it just as he wishes for himself and just as he would act on. To do so, it is necessary for him to be aware about what he is speaking about and advising towards. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

عَلَامَةُ النَّاصِحِ فَأَرْبَعَةٌ يَقْضِي بِالْحَقِّ وَ يُعْطِي الْحَقَّ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَ يَرْضَى لِلنَّاسِ مَا يَرْضَاهُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَ لَا يَعْتَدِي عَلَى أَحَد

> The signs of an adviser are four things: he passes judgment according to the truth, he gives others the truth from himself, he wants for others that which he wants for himself, and he does not transgress against anyone.[i]

2. Considering the Capacity of the One Who Seeks Advice

In seeking what is good for others, apart from recognizing what is goodness, one ought to evaluate the capacity of the other person as well. This is because some people do not have the tolerance to hear out or to act on the truth at its higher levels. The truth must be simplified and watered down so that they can tolerate it, and to the extent of their ability act according to it. If this is not done, the adviser may have a negative effect on them, and he will be liable for the deviation or harm that results.

3. Interacting with Love and Kindness

Most people are not perfect and have shortcomings in their intellect, spirituality, *akhlāq*, or actions. As a result, just as how one should deal with a sick individual with kindness and sympathy so that his

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 20.

pain goes away with ease or so that he forgets about it, advice should also be given with kindness and affection. By doing so, it becomes easy for the listener to tolerate what is being said, and he can implement it. Normally such kindness is manifested by speaking gently with people. Human nature is such that hearing about his own defects is difficult for him and is at odds with his selfishness. Thus, gently speaking the truth and exhibiting kindness and affection increases the effectiveness of advice. Allah ordered Prophet Mūsā and Hārūn (peace be upon them) to interact with their enemy Fir'awn in this way:

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ

> Speak to him in a soft manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear. (20:44)

THE CONDITIONS OF GIVING ADVICE

The cornerstone of giving advice is that the adviser should first be seeking what is best for the other individual when advising him. In addition, he must pay attention to two points:

1. He should be aware of what is good for that person.
2. He should be careful that admonishing others does not turn into a job, because it causes a person to neglect himself.

With regards to seeking goodness for others and giving them advice, there are two extremes that exist, laxity and excessiveness, both of which are reproached and blameworthy. Laxity is when a person is indifferent about seeking goodness for others, when he neglects advising people, and has nothing to do with others and society. Such an outlook has been rejected by the Infallibles (peace be upon them).

On the other hand, excessiveness is when a person neglects paying attention to and having sympathy for his own state. With no regard to reforming and seeking good for himself, he seeks to give advice to others. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said:

مَنْ نَصَحَ نَفْسَهُ كَانَ جَدِيراً بِنُصْحِ غَيْرِه

One who advises himself is befitting to advise others.[i]

Also, it is necessary to be careful that one does not advise another in public, because according to a saying of Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him), such an act is equivalent to rebuking him.[ii] Another important point is that the adviser should be sympathetic. Sometimes, advice is not given sympathetically, such as the advice of Shayṭān to Prophet Ādam (peace be upon him) and Ḥawwāʾ to eat the wheat. Outwardly, this appeared to be an expression of sympathy, but in reality, Shayṭān advised and commanded out of envy.[iii] He could not bear to see the prestige that Allah bestowed on Prophet Ādam, and as a result, he sought to destroy and spoil that prestige. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) also says:

النَّصِيحَةُ مِنَ الْحَاسِدِ مُحَال

[Real] advice from an envious person is impossible.[iv]

Thus, a person must be careful and ensure that the adviser truly possesses a state of sympathy, his advice is in line with reality, and he is guiding him towards felicity.

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 9043.

ii. Ibid., no. 9966.

نُصْحُكَ بَيْنَ الْمَلَإِ تَقْرِيع

Your advice that is done publicly, is a reprimand.

iii. Qur'ān 7:21. According to some narrations, the tree that Prophet Ādam and Ḥawwāʾ (peace be upon them) ate from was in fact not a tree but wheat. (Ed.)

iv. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, p. 194, no. 9.

43
THE RIGHT OF THE ADVISER

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ النَّاصِحِ فَأَنْ تُلِينَ لَهُ جَنَاحَكَ ثُمَّ تَشْرَئِبَّ لَهُ قَلْبَكَ وَ تَفْتَحَ لَهُ سَمْعَكَ حَتَّى تَفْهَمَ عَنْهُ نَصِيحَتَهُ ثُمَّ تَنْظُرَ فِيهَا فَإِنْ كَانَ وُفِّقَ فِيهَا لِلصَّوَابِ حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَ قَبِلْتَ مِنْهُ وَ عَرَفْتَ لَهُ نَصِيحَتَهُ وَ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ وُفِّقَ لَهَا فِيهَا رَحِمْتَهُ وَ لَمْ تَتَّهِمْهُ وَ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَأْلُكَ نُصْحاً إِلَّا أَنَّهُ أَخْطَأَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ عِنْدَكَ مُسْتَحِقّاً لِلتُّهَمَةِ فَلَا تَعْبَأْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the adviser is that you soften your wing for him [show him softness], you turn your heart to him, and you open your ears [and listen attentively to] him so that you understand his advice. Then think about it. If he was given success to [say] that which is correct, then praise Allah for that, accept it from him, and acknowledge his advice as being correct. And if he was not given this success, then show mercy to him, do not accuse him, and know that he has not been neglectful in giving you advice, just that he has made a mistake [and understood incorrectly]. Unless he has become worthy of accusation in your

eyes, then do not—in any situation—attach importance to his command. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

THE RIGHTS OF THE ADVISER ON THE SEEKER OF ADVICE

1. Showing Humility

The seeker of advice ought to humble himself in front of the adviser and listen attentively to what he says, even if he is already aware of it. This is so that the advice influences him.

2. Listening to the Advice

If the advice was in line with reality but a person did not pay any attention to it, then he will not attain the positive outcomes of acting on that advice and is deprived of certain perfection. As said by Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him):

مَنْ خَالَفَ النُّصْحَ هَلَك

Whoever opposes the advice [given to them], has perished.[ii]

3. Praising Allah

Allah has made advice as a path for a person to attain perfection. Hence, after coming across advice that was in line with reality, acting on it, and attaining its desirable outcomes, one must first praise Allah for this blessing. Thereafter, one should also thank the person who placed this path of growth in front of him. In this way, the great right of Allah is fulfilled as well as the right of His servant.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, pp. 269-270.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 7743.

4. Not Accusing the Adviser

If his advice did not turn out to be in accordance with reality, one must not accuse him of betrayal because he did his responsibility and tried to provide a solution. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said:

لِيَكُنْ أَحَبُّ النَّاسِ إِلَيْكَ الْمُشْفِقَ النَّاصِح

The most beloved of men to you, should be the one who is sympathetic and advising.[i]

However, if his betrayal is proven through a rational or *sharʿi* way that yields certainty, one should not pay attention to what he said and should not act on it.

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i. Ibid., no. 7386.

44
THE RIGHT OF THE ELDERLY

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْكَبِيرِ فَإِنَّ حَقَّهُ تَوْقِيرُ سِنِّهِ وَ إِجْلَالُ إِسْلَامِهِ إِذَا كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْفَضْلِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ بِتَقْدِيمِهِ فِيهِ وَ تَرْكُ مُقَابَلَتِهِ عِنْدَ الْخِصَامِ وَ لَا تَسْبِقْهُ إِلَى طَرِيقٍ وَ لَا تَؤُمَّهُ فِي طَرِيقٍ وَ لَا تَسْتَجْهِلْهُ وَ إِنْ جَهِلَ عَلَيْكَ تَحَمَّلْتَ وَ أَكْرَمْتَهُ بِحَقِّ إِسْلَامِهِ مَعَ سِنِّهِ فَإِنَّمَا حَقُّ السِّنِّ بِقَدْرِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And as for the right of the elderly, his right is that you respect his [old] age and honour him due to his Islam. If he was someone of merit in Islam [due to his outstanding past], then give him preference [in all states] and do not confront him by quarrelling. Do not arrive at a path before him, nor walk in front of him, nor consider him to be ignorant. If he behaves ignorantly with you, you should tolerate it and respect him due to the right of Islam along with his age. For indeed, the right of age is to the same extent as the right of Islam. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 270.

RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE ELDERLY

The Holy *sharīʿah* has designated various *akhlāqī* responsibilities towards the elder members of society which indicate the advanced nature of Islam's commandments and the respect it pays to the position of the human, especially believers. Regarding the position of the elderly, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

الشَّيْخُ فِي أَهْلِهِ كَالنَّبِيِّ فِي أُمَّتِهِ

An elderly person among his family, is like a prophet among his nation.[i]

In an upcoming section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) also says—while mentioning some other matters—that among the rights of the people of your creed is that you consider the elderly men among them as your fathers, and the elderly women among them as your mothers.[ii]

1. Respecting Him

This is done by displaying meekness and humility in front of him, not speaking to him harshly, and not opposing him during a discussion. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said to Imam al-Ḥasan (peace be upon him):

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i. al-Nīshābūrī, *Rawḍah al-wāʿiẓīn*, vol. 2, p. 476.

ii. Refer to right number fifty below. Although the version of *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* as narrated in *Al-faqīh* has a slightly different expression that is closer to what the author has mentioned. (Ed.)
al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 2., p. 625.

وَ أَنْ يَكُونَ شُيُوخُهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ أَبِيكَ وَ شُبَّانُهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ إِخْوَتِكَ وَ عَجَائِزُهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ أُمِّكَ وَ الصِّغَارُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ أَوْلَادِكَ

Their old men stand in the place of your father, their youths in the place of your brothers, their old women in the place of your mother, and their young ones in the place of your children.

وَ وَقِّرْ مِنْهُمُ الْكَبِيرَ

Respect the elderly from among them [your family].[i]

2. Honouring Him due to His Precedence in Islam

Precedence in accepting Islam is considered as a distinction for a person and thus puts certain responsibilities on the shoulders of others. Abiding by some of these responsibilities is desirable with respect to all elderly individuals, such as how if we were accompanying them, we should not precede them while walking nor should we walk in front of them. Regardless, to the extent that individuals possess a special distinction—such as having a virtuous character, possessing spiritual perfections, or having a closer family bond—to that same extent it is befitting that the human uphold these responsibilities with them. It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مِنْ إِجْلَالِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِجْلَالُ ذِي الشَّيْبَةِ الْمُسْلِمِ

One of the ways to honour Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, is by honouring the white-bearded Muslim.[ii]

3. Tolerating His Undesirable Behaviour

Sometimes people's undesirable behaviour is due to not knowing the right way to behave and sometimes it is due to their uncontrolled desires. The religion of Islam advises us that in such situations, when dealing with an elderly Muslim, we should not consider him ignorant, and we should tolerate his behaviour. By doing so, we can give him the opportunity to realize his mistake, while protecting his respect due to his age. This also allows us to attain and develop the trait of forbearance. In contrast, when dealing with a non-believer, one should openly work to guide him, mentioning his mistakes with regards to his thoughts, actions, and *akhlāq*. However, due to the

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i. al-Ṭūsī, *Al-amālī*, p. 8.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 658, no. 6.

sanctity that the elderly have in the eyes of Allah, the religion of Islam has also taken into consideration the station of the non-believers among them, just as Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ سَرِيَّةً دَعَاهُمْ فَأَجْلَسَهُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ ... وَ لَا تَقْتُلُوا شَيْخاً فَانِيا

> When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would want to dispatch a military detachment, he would call them and make the sit, then he would say ... "and do not kill the decrepit old individuals."[i]

Such recommendations are due to the greatness of Islam's commandments. They do not allow the slightest disrespect towards the elderly, especially the believers among them, let alone allowing them to be sent to an old-age home and considered as a burden on society and on the family. Thus, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) narrates from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family):

مَنْ عَرَفَ فَضْلَ كَبِيرٍ لِسِنِّهِ فَوَقَّرَهُ آمَنَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَزَعِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

> Whoever recognizes the virtue of the elderly due to their old age and honours him, Allah makes him secure from the fear of the Day of Judgment.[ii]

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 5, p. 27, no. 1.

ii. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 658, no. 2.

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THE RIGHT OF THE YOUNGER ONES

وَ أَمَّا حَقُ الصَّغِيرِ فَرَحْمَتُهُ وَ تَثْقِيفُهُ وَ تَعْلِيمُهُ وَ الْعَفْوُ عَنْهُ وَ السَّتْرُ عَلَيْهِ وَ الرِّفْقُ بِهِ وَ الْمَعُونَةُ لَهُ وَ السَّتْرُ عَلَى جَرَائِرِ حَدَاثَتِهِ فَإِنَّهُ سَبَبٌ لِلتَّوْبَةِ وَ الْمُدَارَاةُ لَهُ وَ تَرْكُ مُمَاحَكَتِهِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى لِرُشْدِهِ

And the right of the youngster is to show him mercy, to train him, to teach him, to forgive him, to cover [his defects], to be gentle with him, to assist him, and to conceal his childish mistakes. For indeed, this [type of behaviour with him] is the cause of his repentance. And [his right is also] to be tolerant with him, and to not bicker with him [to not instigate him through fault-finding and reprehending], as undoubtedly that [behaviour] is closer to his growth.[i]

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 270.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GENTLENESS AND TOLERANCE IN TRAINING

In dealing with youngsters, we should first become aware of their capabilities and how they develop and grow in various dimensions and then behave with them with mercy and kindness, meaning we should be sympathetic towards them because they cannot manage themselves and fulfil their own needs. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

أَحِبُّوا الصِّبْيَانَ وَ ارْحَمُوهُم

Love children and be kind to them.[i]

The human's most important needs in his life pertain to culture and knowledge, and they are not fulfilled through his schooling alone. His need for training (*tarbiyah*) is more dire, and it is the job of the father and mother to employ the method of training that has been taken from the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* to teach their children the etiquettes of speaking, interacting with elders, associating with neighbours, establishing social relationships, and so on. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

مَنْ رَبَّى صَغِيْرًا حَتَّى يَقُولَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّه لَمْ يُحَاسِبْهُ اللَّهُ

Whoever trains a child until he says, "*lā ilāha illallāh*", Allah does will not take account of him.[ii]

However, in learning and refining one's etiquettes, some individuals are slow and change their etiquettes later than others. With such individuals, one should overlook their faults because all of us have come into this world with deficiencies and defects. For such individuals to develop, one should be gentle and patient with them. Gentleness and tolerance are very effective, whether it be with respect to oneself or with respect to others, especially in matters of education and training. Through gentleness, one can continuously keep

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 49, no. 3.

ii. Pāyandih, *Nahj al-faṣāḥah*, p. 768.

himself and others on the path towards perfection. However, if one does not act in a gentle manner, then the child or the young man will suddenly rebel. Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

الرِّفْقُ يُيَسِّرُ الصِّعَابَ وَ يُسَهِّلُ شَدِيدَ الْأَسْبَابِ

> Gentleness causes difficult matters to become easy and renders those matters that have hard causes to become easy.[i]

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE VARIOUS NECESSITIES OF TRAINING

To implement the aforementioned matters, one must make use of his intellect and think. A person should always employ his intellect, think, and contemplate about the different situations of life, whether it be situations where he affects his surrounding environment or where he is affected by it. When presenting solutions to others, a person must first think and ponder. In fact, one portion of these solutions are attained by such pondering and by taking lessons from the past. He must consider: how beneficial were his previous interactions, and how harmful were they? By doing so, he can continue to act in accordance with the beneficial interactions and cast aside those which were harmful.

Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that every age has its own necessities. One ought to behave with children in accordance with the necessities of their age, to the extent that it does not cause substantial harm to others. For example, if a child commits a bad action, his relatives should not immediately and repeatedly point out his mistake. Rather, they should try to behave with him in a way that he himself understands that he has done something bad and feels ashamed. It is very effective for a child to understand this and for him to realize the results of his bad action.

Another approach is to make children understand what the

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i. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 1778.

negative consequences of an action are, through tender and soft words, such that the badness of their action becomes tangible for them. A person matures due to logical reasoning, and such maturity is a type of fundamental and underlying development. On the other hand, maturity and development that is imposed on him from the outside is not that effective. In such situations it is as if there are explosive materials that remain, and when pressure is exerted, one day they will explode. The human is like this; various explosive materials are hidden within his existence such as the faculties of anger and lust. At any given moment, depending on that individual, a specific portion of those faculties can be provoked and explode. Some people are such that the faculty of anger is stronger in them and more manifested in their existence, for others it is the faculty of lust. There are different instances of the faculty of lust. For some, the manifestation of lust is more in their inclination to eat, for others it is a lust towards speaking, and for others it is the lust of seeking superiority. These are specific inclinations that exist within the human; whenever they come about, their existence and extent must be identified so that by careful planning their explosion and rebellion can be prevented.

AN IMPORTANT WAY FOR CONTROLLING THE SOUL'S REBELLION

Children and youth have certain particularities in how they are stimulated and how they understand, and they also have specific types of energy and excitement that erupts at specific times. These must be controlled and directed so that they do not cause harm to the youngsters themselves and to others. In this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) mentions veiling and covering these rebellions as a very precise and important solution which causes one to repent. Just as how Allah's covering of His servants has the same effect. In most cases, Allah covers our crimes so that a person is not ashamed of his mistake and is not disgraced before others. In the Qur'ān it says that:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُم مِّن مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ

Whatever affliction that may visit you is because of what your hands have earned, and He excuses many [an offense of yours]. (42:30)

It is possible that due to negligence, a person attributes this grace of Allah to his own cleverness. However, in reality, it is Allah's attribute of being the Concealer that has prevented him from being disgraced. Paying attention to this matter causes a person to be ashamed and attracts him towards returning to Allah.

The Imam says that overlooking the faults of youngsters causes them to repent, being tolerant with them causes them to not feel animosity, and that this is better for their growth. This means that, in social issues and issues related to the training of children, one should try to avoid allowing enmity and stubbornness to take shape, as much as possible. Such behaviour is intended to tame the souls of these youngsters. The human soul is very astonishing, if its reins are not seized with strength, then just like a wild horse, it throws down its rider in such a way that it is difficult for him to get up again. For this reason, in the religion of Islam it has been advised to behave with tenderness and tolerance with one's own soul as well as the souls of others:

إِنَّ نَفْسَكَ مَطِيَّتُكَ إِنْ أَجْهَدْتَهَا قَتَلْتَهَا وَ إِنْ رَفَقْتَ بِهَا أَبْقَيْتَهَا

Your soul is your steed. If you overwork it, you will kill it. But if you act gently with it, you will spare it.[i]

Sometimes it is seen that people are afflicted with extreme behaviour, for example when showing respect towards the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), when studying, or when memorizing the Qur'ān. So much so that after a while, they do not even have the patience to look at a book or attend a gathering of remembrance and admonition. Therefore, one should be very careful that youngsters are

i. al-Wāsitī, *'Uyūn al-ḥikam wa al-mawā'iẓ*, p. 155.

not put under pressure. It should not be the case that one observes that their child has a high potential and a strong memory and thus, they start imposing various programs on him in addition to his daily lessons. Rather, one should consider the necessities of his age. His energy should be exhausted through playing and by performing permissible actions which are within the scope of his ability. Otherwise, problems and difficulties will arise at a later age. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ أَعَانَ وَلَدَهُ عَلَى بِرِّهِ قَالَ قُلْتُ كَيْفَ يُعِينُهُ عَلَى بِرِّهِ قَالَ يَقْبَلُ مَيْسُورَهُ وَ يَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ مَعْسُورِهِ وَ لَا يُرْهِقُهُ وَ لَا يَخْرَقُ بِهِ

"May Allah have mercy upon someone who assists his child in his righteousness." The narrator said, "I asked, 'How should he assist him in his righteousness?' The Prophet said, 'By accepting that which is easy for him [and within his ability], overlooking that which is difficult for him, not overburdening him [with work that he cannot perform], and not making him scared and perplexed [by overburdening him].'"[i]

i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 50, no. 6.

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THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO ASKS

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ السَّائِلِ فَإِعْطَاؤُهُ إِذَا تَيَقَّنْتَ صِدْقَهُ وَ قَدَرْتَ عَلَى سَدِّ حَاجَتِهِ وَ الدُّعَاءُ لَهُ فِيمَا نَزَلَ بِهِ وَ الْمُعَاوَنَةُ لَهُ عَلَى طَلِبَتِهِ وَ إِنْ شَكَكْتَ فِي صِدْقِهِ وَ سَبَقَتْ إِلَيْهِ التُّهَمَةُ لَهُ وَ لَمْ تَعْزِمْ عَلَى ذَلِكَ لَمْ تَأْمَنْ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنْ كَيْدِ الشَّيْطَانِ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَصُدَّكَ عَنْ حَظِّكَ وَ يَحُولَ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ التَّقَرُّبِ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَتَرَكْتَهُ بِسَتْرِهِ وَ رَدَدْتَهُ رَدّاً جَمِيلًا وَ إِنْ غَلَبَتْ نَفْسَكَ فِي أَمْرِهِ وَ أَعْطَيْتَهُ عَلَى مَا عَرَضَ فِي نَفْسِكَ مِنْهُ- فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

And the right of the one who asks is that you give him when you are certain that he is telling the truth and when you are able to fulfil his need. And that you supplicate for him with regards to that [difficulty] which has descended upon him and assist him in what he has requested. However, if you have doubt in the truthfulness of his claim, if you suspect him, and do not intend to give him anything, then [know that with such thoughts] you are not safe from the plot of Shayṭān. Perhaps Shayṭān wants to prevent you from your share [of reward] and obstruct

you from attaining your Lord's proximity. Thus, leave him aside while keeping his secret and refuse him in a beautiful manner, and if you overpower yourself and give him something despite the thoughts which passed through your mind, then that is indeed the steadiest of courses.[i]

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING QUESTIONS IN ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS

Due to the human's limitations and needs—in his material, practical, and spiritual dimensions—certain courses of action to fulfil these needs have been placed in his existence. One of these courses of action is to ask someone else who can fulfil his need, for assistance. Although, when the stimulative and cognitive faculties of a person attain a relative strength, he should take his affairs into his own hands and employ those faculties so that they constantly strengthen. Specifically with regards to attaining knowledge, so long as a person can fulfil his own needs through his faculty of thought, he should not request others to help him. Rather, it has been advised that a person should develop his capabilities by seeking assistance from Allah.

Nonetheless, in the process of education and training, one of the fundamentals of learning is to ask questions. Asking questions is not something reproached or disliked in academic discussions, rather it is something desirable. However, one must be wary of its limits because if they are not observed, then asking questions will become something blameworthy. Some people do not want to make use of their intellect and always try to make others do all the thinking instead of themselves! This is wrong. A person should learn the primary material and the principles of knowledge properly from his teacher and mentor, but after learning them, he must employ his own thinking. In this way he must uncover and extract the branches and particular instances of that knowledge, by himself.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 270.

THE LIMIT OF ASKING FROM OTHERS

By keeping these discussions in mind, we must consider: what is the position of making material requests from others in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them)? For example, from whom should one ask? The Ahl al-Bayt have reproached the state wherein a person is forced to ask from others. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said to Abū Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِيَّاكَ وَ السُّؤَالَ فَإِنَّهُ ذُلٌّ حَاضِرٌ وَ فَقْرٌ تَتَعَجَّلُه

> O Abū Dharr! Beware of asking [and exhibiting one's needs] for indeed it is abasement at present, and it is a poverty that you are making afflict yourself sooner. (i)

This means that someone who extends his hand in need towards others and does not make use of his own strength and ability to fulfil his needs, has abased himself. Of course, it is clear that the Prophet was talking about those instances when a person does not make use of his own skills and capabilities to fulfil his needs, and in spite of having those, he still asks others for help. The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) also says:

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ فَتَحَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَاباً مِنَ الْمَسْأَلَةِ إِلَّا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ سَبْعِينَ بَاباً مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

> There is no servant who opens a door of asking [the help of others] on himself except that Allah opens seventy doors of poverty on him. (ii)

This is because if a person tastes the sweetness of having his needs fulfilled by another person, his expectations constantly increase, and new needs are created for him. While it is true that there are times in this world when there is no escape from asking others for help, but as much as possible, a person should train himself, his children,

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 375, no. 5762.

ii. al-Sha'īrī, *Jami' al-akhbār*, p. 136.

and those around him to stand on their own feet. The fundamentals of nurturing people as per the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) dictate that a person should grow from within and this type of growth strengthens the faculties of thinking, intellection, as well as the body. If this happens, then this growth which stems from within, is permanent. It is like a tree that has grown strong and can survive on the smallest amount of water that it absorbs through its deep roots. But a weak and pampered tree is such that it must constantly be given water and cared for. If it is not watered for a few days, it withers and dies.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

اشْتَدَّتْ حَالُ رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ ص فَقَالَتْ لَهُ امْرَأَتُهُ لَوْ أَتَيْتَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص فَسَأَلْتَهُ فَجَاءَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ص فَلَمَّا رَآهُ النَّبِيُّ ص قَالَ مَنْ سَأَلَنَا أَعْطَيْنَاهُ وَ مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى أَغْنَاهُ اللَّهُ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ مَا يَعْنِي غَيْرِي فَرَجَعَ إِلَى امْرَأَتِهِ فَأَعْلَمَهَا فَقَالَتْ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص بَشَرٌ فَأَعْلِمْهُ فَأَتَاهُ فَلَمَّا رَآهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص قَالَ مَنْ سَأَلَنَا أَعْطَيْنَاهُ وَ مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى أَغْنَاهُ اللَّهُ حَتَّى فَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثاً ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ الرَّجُلُ فَاسْتَعَارَ مِعْوَلًا ثُمَّ أَتَى الْجَبَلَ فَصَعِدَهُ فَقَطَعَ حَطَباً ثُمَّ جَاءَ بِهِ فَبَاعَهُ بِنِصْفِ مُدٍّ مِنْ دَقِيقٍ فَرَجَعَ بِهِ فَأَكَلَهُ ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ مِنَ الْغَدِ فَجَاءَ بِأَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَبَاعَهُ فَلَمْ يَزَلْ يَعْمَلُ وَ يَجْمَعُ حَتَّى اشْتَرَى مِعْوَلًا ثُمَّ جَمَعَ حَتَّى اشْتَرَى بَكْرَيْنِ وَ غُلَاماً ثُمَّ أَثْرَى حَتَّى أَيْسَرَ فَجَاءَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ص فَأَعْلَمَهُ كَيْفَ جَاءَ يَسْأَلُهُ وَ كَيْفَ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ ص فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ ص قُلْتُ لَكَ مَنْ سَأَلَنَا أَعْطَيْنَاهُ وَ مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى أَغْنَاهُ اللَّهُ

The situation of a man from among the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his

family) became difficult. His wife said, "If only you were to go to the Prophet and ask him [for help]." So, the man came to the Prophet. When the Prophet saw him, he said, "Whoever asks us, we shall give him, but whoever seeks to be needless, Allah shall make him needless." The man said to himself, "He does not intend anyone else but me!" Then he returned to his wife and informed her. The woman said, "The Messenger of Allah is a human [and is unaware of your condition], so inform him." The man again went to him, and when the Prophet saw him, he [again] said, "Whoever asks us, we shall give him, but whoever seeks to be needless, Allah shall make him needless." Until the man did this three times. Then [at this point] he went and borrowed an axe, took to the mountain side, ascended the mountain, and cut some firewood. He sold this for half a *mudd*[i] of flour, took it to his house, and ate it. Then the next day he went [again] and brought more firewood and sold it. He did not cease to work [in this manner] and gather until he bought an axe [of his own]. Then, he accumulated [more and more] until he bought two camels and a slave and became wealthy and needless. At that point, he came to the Prophet and informed him about how he came to him to ask and how he heard the Prophet [and what he said]. The Prophet said, "I said to you, whoever asks us, we will give him, but whoever seeks to be needless, Allah makes him needless!"[ii]

THE RIGHTS OF THE ONE WHO ASKS

If after observing the aforementioned points, someone still presents his need and asks for help, what responsibilities exist with respect to him? To answer this question, the Noble Qur'ān says:

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ

i. A *mudd* is a dry measure used by the early Muslims and used in Islamic jurisprudence. It is approximately equivalent to 750 grams. (Ed.)

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 139, no. 7.

And as for the beggar, do not chide him. (93:10)

It is necessary that a person briefly investigate the situation of someone who presents his need and asks for help, so that if he is deserving of help, then he could fulfil his need to the extent of his ability. However, if that is not possible, for example if he is a passer-by, then it has been said that one should give him something even if it is very little. Fulfilling the need of others, especially those who ask, is so important that Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَسْأَلُنِي الْحَاجَةَ فَأُبَادِرُ بِقَضَائِهَا مَخَافَةَ أَنْ يَسْتَغْنِيَ عَنْهَا فَلَا يَجِدَ لَهَا مَوْقِعاً إِذَا جَاءَتْه

> Verily, a person asks me for his need and so I rush to fulfil it, lest his need is fulfilled [by some other means], and there is no [longer any] need for it when I come [to assist him]![i]

Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (peace be upon him) said that if you are certain of his truthfulness and you can fulfil his need, then give him, pray that his need is fulfilled, and help him in this regard. Even if you doubt his truthfulness after having tested him in the past, then do not reject him completely and give him something even if it may be little. When we observe the conduct of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them), we see that they acted like this, either they would directly fulfil the need of the one asking, or they would do so indirectly. For example, sometimes they would write letters encouraging people to fulfil the needs of the needy. This is because if a person can fulfil the needs of the needy and does not do so then there are unfavourable consequences. Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said in a saying:

لَا تَرُدَّ سَائِلًا وَ لَوْ مِنْ شَطْرِ حَبَّةِ عِنَبٍ أَوْ شِقِّ تَمْرَة

Do not reject someone who asks even if it is with half a

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i. al-Ṣadūq, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (peace be upon him), vol. 2, p. 179, no. 2.

grape or half a date.[i]

Musma' ibn 'Abd al-Malik, a companion of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), says:

كُنَّا عِنْدَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع بِمِنًى وَ بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا عِنَبٌ نَأْكُلُهُ فَجَاءَ سَائِلٌ فَسَأَلَهُ فَأَمَرَ بِعُنْقُودٍ فَأَعْطَاهُ فَقَالَ السَّائِلُ لَا حَاجَةَ لِي فِي هَذَا إِنْ كَانَ دِرْهَمٌ قَالَ يَسَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ فَذَهَبَ ثُمَّ رَجَعَ فَقَالَ رُدُّوا الْعُنْقُودَ فَقَالَ يَسَعُ اللَّهُ لَكَ وَ لَمْ يُعْطِهِ شَيْئاً ثُمَّ جَاءَ سَائِلٌ آخَرُ فَأَخَذَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع ثَلَاثَ حَبَّاتِ عِنَبٍ فَنَاوَلَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَأَخَذَهَا السَّائِلُ مِنْ يَدِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعالَمِينَ الَّذِي رَزَقَنِي فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع مَكَانَكَ فَحَثَا مِلْءَ كَفَّيْهِ عِنَباً فَنَاوَلَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَأَخَذَهَا السَّائِلُ مِنْ يَدِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعالَمِينَ الَّذِي رَزَقَنِي فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع مَكَانَكَ يَا غُلَامُ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ مَعَكَ مِنَ الدَّرَاهِمِ فَإِذَا مَعَهُ نَحْوٌ مِنْ عِشْرِينَ دِرْهَماً فِيمَا حَزَرْنَاهُ أَوْ نَحْوِهَا فَنَاوَلَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَأَخَذَهَا ثُمَّ قَالَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ هَذَا مِنْكَ وَحْدَكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع مَكَانَكَ فَخَلَعَ قَمِيصاً كَانَ عَلَيْهِ فَقَالَ الْبَسْ هَذَا فَلَبِسَهُ فَقَالَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي كَسَانِي وَ سَتَرَنِي يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْ قَالَ جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْراً ... قَالَ فَظَنَنَّا أَنَّهُ لَوْ لَمْ يَدْعُ لَهُ لَمْ يَزَلْ يُعْطِيهِ لِأَنَّهُ كُلَّمَا كَانَ يُعْطِيهِ حَمِدَ اللَّهَ أَعْطَاه

We were in the presence of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) in Minā, eating grapes, when a beggar came and asked him for help. The Imam commanded that one bunch of grapes be brought, and he gave it to him. The beggar said, "I do not need this. If you give me *dirhams*

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 172.

[that would be good]." The Imam said, "[Go] may Allah grant you abundance." The beggar left and then returned and said, "Give that bunch of grapes." The Imam said, "[Go] may Allah grant you relief," and he did not give him anything. Then, another beggar came. The Imam gave him three grapes. The beggar took them and said, "All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds, who gave me sustenance." The Imam said, "Wait!" He filled his hands with grapes and gave them to him. The beggar took them and [again] said, "All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds, who gave me sustenance." The Imam [again] said, "Wait!" [He asked his slave], "How many *dirhams* do you have?" He had approximately twenty *dirhams* with him. He gave it to him. The beggar took it and said, "All praise belongs to Allah. This blessing is from You, the One who has no partner." Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) [once again] said, "Wait!" He removed the shirt he was wearing and said, "Wear this." The beggar wore it and said, "All praise belongs to Allah who clothed and covered me." [And then he addressed the Imam and said], "O Abā 'Abdillāh" or he said, "May Allah reward *you* with goodness." ... The narrator said, "We thought [to ourselves] that if that beggar had not prayed for the Imam, he would have continuously given him more and more. Because every time he gave him and the beggar praised Allah, he gave him something [else]."[i]

Fulfilling the needs of others—for example by giving charity—has existential and social effects on a person's existence and at times, it even prevents calamities. Thus, due to the desirability of giving charity and accepting the request of one who asks for something, from an *akhlāqī* point of view, a person should not abandon this. Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) says:

وَ لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمَسْئُولُ مَا فِي الْمَنْعِ مَا مَنَعَ أَحَدٌ أَحَدا

i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 47, pp. 42-43, no. 56.

If the person from whom something is requested only knew how [bad the outcome of] rejecting is, no one would have rejected anyone.[i]

INSTANCES WHERE IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO REQUEST

Even though begging is something reproached, at times a person cannot fulfil his needs without taking a loan because of being in difficultly and under intolerable financial pressure. In such a situation, there is no problem in requesting from others. A beggar once came to Imam al-Ḥasan and Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon them) and presented his request which had not been answered by others. They said:

يَا هَذَا إِنَّ الْمَسْأَلَةَ لَا تَحِلُّ إِلَّا فِي إِحْدَى ثَلَاثٍ دَمٍ مُفْجِعٍ أَوْ دَيْنٍ مُقْرِحٍ أَوْ فَقْرٍ مُدْقِعٍ

O Man! Requesting is not permissible except in one of three instances: blood that [was unjustly spilled and] has inflicted grief, a loan which has wounded [one's heart], or poverty that has brought about misery and abasement.[ii]

The *sharī'ah* has designated portions from the *khums* and *zakāt* for the needy and has also encouraged believers to give recommended charity. If believers to do not fulfil these obligatory and recommended responsibilities, or if these sources do not suffice for the needs of the needy, then those who hold social or religious positions as well as the rich should step forward and take actions to fulfil the needs of this group. If none of these avenues exist, then at that time it would be appropriate for a needy person to request for help.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 300.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 135, no. 149.

THE ETIQUETTE OF ASKING FOR ONE'S NEED

By keeping the previous discussions in mind, if an urgent need presents itself which requires one to ask others for help, then it is desirable that one asks from someone who is worthy of it. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) said:

فَوْتُ الْحَاجَةِ أَهْوَنُ مِنْ طَلَبِهَا إِلَى غَيْرِ أَهْلِهَا

To lose a need [it not being fulfilled] is easier than asking for its fulfilment from an unworthy individual.[i]

It has been mentioned in a narration that one of the individuals from the *anṣār* came to Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) and presented a request. After responding to his request, the Imam said:

وَ لَا تَرْفَعْ حَاجَتَكَ إِلَّا إِلَى أَحَدِ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَى ذِي دِينٍ أَوْ مُرُوَّةٍ أَوْ حَسَبٍ فَأَمَّا ذُو الدِّينِ فَيَصُونُ دِينَهُ وَ أَمَّا ذُو الْمُرُوَّةِ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْتَحْيِي لِمُرُوَّتِهِ وَ أَمَّا ذُو الْحَسَبِ فَيَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ لَمْ تُكْرِمْ وَجْهَكَ أَنْ تَبْذُلَهُ لَهُ فِي حَاجَتِكَ فَهُوَ يَصُونُ وَجْهَكَ أَنْ يَرُدَّكَ بِغَيْرِ قَضَاءِ حَاجَتِكَ.

Do not raise your need before anyone except one of these three: a religious person, a chivalrous one, or someone with a noble family. As for the religious person, he will preserve his religion [by fulfilling your need], as for the chivalrous one, he will feel ashamed [to not answer your request] due to his chivalry, and as for the one with a noble family, he understands that by requesting him, you have overlooked your dignity and he will therefore strive to protect your dignity by fulfilling your need.[ii]

Due to these attributes, the dignity of the requester is protected, and begging will not become prevalent in society. In the narrations

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying no. 66.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 247.

of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), the relationship between believers has been presented as being very warm and friendly. In one narration, Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَيَسْكُنُ إِلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ كَمَا يَسْكُنُ الظَّمْآنُ إِلَى الْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ

A believer attains tranquillity with another believer just as a thirsty person attains tranquillity with cool water.[i]

This means that a believer can easily speak to another believer regarding his difficulties when he needs to. There is no lying, deception, or betrayal between them. And to whatever extent possible, the believer who hears these will solve the problems of his fellow believer. For this reason, Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) says:

مَنْ شَكَا ضُرَّهُ إِلَى مُؤْمِنٍ فَكَأَنَّمَا شَكَا إِلَى اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَه

One who complains about his distress to a believer [and confides in him], it is as if he has complained to [and confided in] in Allah.[ii]

This is as opposed to confiding in a disbeliever which is, in reality, complaining about Allah.[iii] Allah and His *awliyā'* do not approve of that at all.

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 247, no. 1.

ii. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 8792.

iii. Ibid., no. 8791.

مَنْ شَكَا ضُرَّهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ مُؤْمِنٍ فَكَأَنَّمَا شَكَا اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ

Whoever complains about his distress to other than a believer, it is as if he has complained about Allah the Immaculate

47

THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO IS ASKED

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ الْمَسْئُولِ فَحَقُّهُ إِنْ أَعْطَى قُبِلَ مِنْهُ مَا أَعْطَى بِالشُّكْرِ لَهُ وَ الْمَعْرِفَةِ لِفَضْلِهِ وَ طَلَبِ وَجْهِ الْعُذْرِ فِي مَنْعِهِ وَ أَحْسِنْ بِهِ الظَّنَّ وَ اعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ إِنْ مَنَعَ فَمَالَهُ مَنَعَ وَ أَنْ لَيْسَ التَّثْرِيبُ فِي مَالِهِ وَ إِنْ كَانَ ظَالِماً فَ إِنَّ الْإِنْسانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّار

And the right of the one who is asked is that if he gives, then whatever he gives should be accepted with gratitude and appreciation. And if he doesn't give, then an excuse should be sought for him. You should have a good opinion about him, and you should know that if he did not give anything, then it is his own wealth that he did not give. There is no blame upon him regarding his own wealth, even if he is unjust [to himself] as, "indeed the human is most unjust and ungrateful."[i] [ii]

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i. Qur'ān 14:34.

ii. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 270.

THE RIGHTS OF THE ONE WHO IS ASKED

Whenever a person presents a material or academic request to someone, the one being asked has certain rights on the asker.

1. Gratitude

The more that the one being asked gives importance to the need of the needy person, the more he has manifested the attributes of mercy and generosity, and in return the requester should be thankful for that which was given to him. Being thankful to others is an innate characteristic within the human. The first level of gratitude is that a person acquire knowledge regarding the blessing which Allah or others have bestowed upon him, meaning that he must be someone who recognizes blessings. Just as Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) has stated:

مَا أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى عَبْدٍ نِعْمَةً فَشَكَرَهَا بِقَلْبِهِ إِلَّا اسْتَوْجَبَ الْمَزِيدَ فِيهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يُظْهِرَ شُكْرَهَا عَلَى لِسَانِهِ

> Allah does not bestow a blessing upon His servant that the servant thanks Him for, from [the bottom of] his heart, except that before he expresses his thanks with his tongue, he deserves an increase in that blessing.[i]

However, if a person is ungrateful, apart from the fact that he has taken a stance against his Divine innate nature, he has also deprived himself. This is because it is possible that the giver will not help him on future occasions and will advise others to not give him anything. One of the causes of deprivation is this very ingratitude, about which the Noble Qur'ān says the following in a severe tone:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

And when your Lord proclaimed, "If you are grateful,

i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 68, p. 53, no. 83.

I will surely enhance you [in blessings], but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe." (14:7)

2. Having a Good Opinion (Ḥusn al-Ẓann)

If the one being asked does not provide any help, as per the words of Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him), the asker should find an excuse for him and should not say to himself, "He was stingy to me. I will get him back!" This is the behaviour of worldly people. The Imam says that one should realize that if he refused to give, he has authority over his wealth, there is no blame on him with regards to his own wealth. Of course, if he possessed that which was asked of him and did not give it despite being aware that the requester was deserving of it, then he has definitely been unjust and ungrateful to Allah's blessing. However, he cannot be taken to account for this, and in this regard the requester has no right to argue.

Gratitude for the blessing of knowledge that Allah has given someone is displayed by teaching it to others, while also observing its conditions. Gratitude for a material blessing that Allah has bestowed upon someone is that he gives a portion of it to those who are needy. Even if the person being helped was not really needy, the helper has not incurred any loss, rather the praiseworthy trait of generosity has still manifested itself within him. Moreover, this action also has positive social effects. When this helper is in a tight situation, Allah will make other people consider helping him. They will feel that they ought to reciprocate his goodness by helping him.

48

THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO MAKES YOU HAPPY

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ مَنْ سَرَّكَ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ تَعَمَّدَهَا لَكَ حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ أَوَّلًا ثُمَّ شَكَرْتَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ بِقَدْرِهِ فِي مَوْضِعِ الْجَزَاءِ وَ كَافَأْتَهُ عَلَى فَضْلِ الِابْتِدَاءِ وَ أَرْصَدْتَ لَهُ الْمُكَافَأَةَ وَ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ تَعَمَّدَهَا حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ وَ شَكَرْتَهُ وَ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ مِنْهُ تَوَحَّدَكَ بِهَا وَ أَحْبَبْتَ هَذَا إِذْ كَانَ سَبَباً مِنْ أَسْبَابِ نِعَمِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَ تَرْجُو لَهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ خَيْراً فَإِنَّ أَسْبَابَ النِّعَمِ بَرَكَةٌ حَيْثُ مَا كَانَتْ وَ إِنْ كَانَ لَمْ يَتَعَمَّدْ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the one whom Allah makes you happy through him and by his hand, is that if he did so intentionally then first praise Allah, and thereafter [when you are] in the position of rewarding him, thank him for that [deed, by doing something] to the same extent [as what he did]. Due to the merit of being first [and initiating the goodness], you should recompense him and await an opportunity to do so. However, if he did not do so intentionally, then praise Allah, thank Him, know that this happiness is from Him, and He singled you out for

it. Also, love this person for he became [an intermediary and] a cause from among the causes of Allah's blessings to reach you. Henceforth you should desire goodness for him even though he acted unintentionally, because the causes of blessings are themselves a grace and blessing, wherever they may be. And there is no strength except with Allah.[i]

TYPES OF HAPPINESS AND THOSE WHO MAKE OTHERS HAPPY

Allah has created the human in such a way that when something desirable reaches him, he acquires an emotional and spiritual state of exhilaration, and his heart expands. This is known as happiness. This happiness is found both when something desirable is attained and when something undesirable is removed. The highest level of happiness is the state which comes about in a person due to attaining real perfections and being distanced from wretchedness and undesirable spiritual states. Every action that takes us closer to our real perfection causes this state of expansion in our heart. The things that make a person happy are different and each of them possesses its own virtues, but those who place real happiness at a person's disposal by guiding him to his true perfection possess the highest level of virtue, such as the prophets, the *awliyā'*, and the scholars.

THE VIRTUES OF MAKING A BELIEVER HAPPY

From the perspective of human and social relationships, the very purpose behind the human creation is so that he causes goodness and benefit to reach others. Due to his innate nature, every human being becomes happy when he acquires something good and beneficial. Despite this, to encourage people to perform good deeds and make others happy, the virtues of this have been mentioned by the infallible Imams (peace be upon them). The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 271.

مَنْ سَرَّ مُؤْمِناً فَقَدْ سَرَّنِي وَ مَنْ سَرَّنِي فَقَدْ سَرَّ اللَّه

Whoever makes a believer happy has indeed made me happy, and whoever makes me happy has indeed made Allah happy.[i]

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

إِذَا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَبْرِهِ خَرَجَ مَعَهُ مِثَالٌ يَقْدُمُ أَمَامَهُ كُلَّمَا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُ هَوْلًا مِنْ أَهْوَالِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ قَالَ لَهُ الْمِثَالُ لَا تَفْزَعْ وَ لَا تَحْزَنْ وَ أَبْشِرْ بِالسُّرُورِ وَ الْكَرَامَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ ... فَيَقُولُ مَنْ أَنْتَ فَيَقُولُ أَنَا السُّرُورُ الَّذِي كُنْتَ أَدْخَلْتَ عَلَى أَخِيكَ الْمُؤْمِنِ فِي الدُّنْيَا خَلَقَنِي اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ مِنْهُ لِأُبَشِّرَكَ

When Allah brings forth a believer from his grave, a being comes out with him which then walks in front of him. Whenever the believer sees one of the terrifying fears of the Day of Judgment, that being says to him, "Do not be alarmed and sorrowful. Rather, receive glad tidings of happiness and honour from Allah the Invincible and Majestic" ... He [the believer] asks, "Who are you?" He replies, "I am that happiness which you instilled in the heart of your believing brother in the world. Allah the Invincible and Majestic, created me from that [happiness] so that I may give you glad tidings."[ii]

There are various ways to make others happy, it is not just limited to extending financial help. It is possible that someone does not have enough wealth to make others happy, but he is able to make them happy through his good behaviour and soft words. In this way he makes them forget about their worries. However, making some

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 188, no. 1.

ii. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 190, no. 8.

particular people happy, such as orphans and the broken-hearted, has special merits. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ دَاراً يُقَالُ لَهَا دَارُ الْفَرَحِ لَا يَدْخُلُهَا إِلَّا مَنْ فَرَّحَ يَتَامَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

> In paradise, there is a house which is called the house of happiness and joy. Nobody enters in it except those who have made the orphans of the believers happy.[i]

THE HUMAN BEING'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE ONE WHO MAKES HIM HAPPY

If someone intentionally instilled happiness and joy in our hearts, we should pay attention to the fact that it was still Allah who guided them to this act. Based on a *tawḥīdī* perspective, all goodness and perfections that are manifested by any being are only realized by Allah's permission and with His will. Therefore, it is necessary to first express gratitude and thanks towards Allah and then towards the one who was an intermediary for this happiness.

Thankfulness is of two types: verbal and practical. Practical thankfulness towards someone who makes us happy means that a person should await the opportunity to recompense his kindness, to the extent possible and in accordance with the status of that person. This could be by fulfilling a need or solving a problem of his. Of course, it was that individual who first performed a good act and for this reason, he has a degree of excellence over the one who seeks to recompense. Therefore, apart from verbal thanks, it is befitting to seek to recompense his grace and goodness in some practical way and to still realize that regardless, that individual's action is higher than ours. Even if we try to recompense it, we should not think that we have done something significant, because he performed a good deed first. For this reason, it has been said that someone who says *salām*

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i. al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, no. 6009.

first receives sixty-nine rewards while the one who answers receives one reward.[i] The purpose of such traditions is to encourage us not to wait for others to do good.

However, if that person did not perform the good deed intentionally and yet his action resulted in your happiness, then first praise Allah that you attained this blessing. Next, thank that individual as well, because regardless of his intention, he provided the causes of your happiness and joy. This thankfulness becomes a cause for Allah to make more blessings descend on you and that person will also be encouraged to perform more good deeds.

The thought of performing a good deed is something good. It has been narrated that the intention of a believer is better than the good deed itself.[ii] This is because it is possible that sometimes, performing a good deed is accompanied by ostentation. However, a good thought can never be accompanied by such problems. This explanation shows that a person should always seek to perform good deeds even if it is just at the level of having a good intention, so that he constantly yields the good benefits of this and remains on the path of goodness.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 248.

لِلسَّلَامِ سَبْعُونَ حَسَنَةً تِسْعٌ وَ سِتُّونَ لِلْمُبْتَدِئِ وَ وَاحِدَةٌ لِلرَّادِ

For the *salām* there are seventy rewards, sixty-nine for the one who initiates, and one for the one who responds.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 84, no. 2.

نِيَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ

The intention of a believer is better than his action.

49

THE RIGHT OF THE ONE WHO DOES EVIL TO YOU

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ مَنْ سَاءَكَ الْقَضَاءُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ بِقَوْلٍ أَوْ فِعْلٍ فَإِنْ كَانَ تَعَمَّدَهَا كَانَ الْعَفْوُ أَوْلَى بِكَ لِمَا فِيهِ لَهُ مِنَ الْقَمْعِ وَ حُسْنِ الْأَدَبِ مَعَ كَثِيرِ أَمْثَالِهِ مِنَ الْخَلْقِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَقُولُ وَ لَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولئِكَ ما عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ إِلَى قَوْلِهِ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ وَ قَالَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَ وَ إِنْ عاقَبْتُمْ فَعاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ ما عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَ لَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ هَذَا فِي الْعَمْدِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ عَمْداً لَمْ تَظْلِمْهُ بِتَعَمُّدِ الِانْتِصَارِ مِنْهُ فَتَكُونَ قَدْ كَافَأْتَهُ فِي تَعَمُّدٍ عَلَى خَطَإٍ وَ رَفَقْتَ بِهِ وَ رَدَدْتَهُ بِأَلْطَفِ مَا تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And the right of the one who, by means of his hand, the Divine decree has hurt you through speech or action, is that if it was intentional, then you ought to forgive [him]. This is more worthy of you because of how it uproots [indignation] and because it is a form of good behaviour that is accompanied by other *akhlāqī* merits. Allah says, "As for those who retaliate after being wronged, there is no

ground for action against them,"[i] up until he says, "[As for someone who endures patiently and forgives,] that is indeed the steadiest of courses."[ii] And He, the Invincible and the Majestic, says, "Should you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer, but if you are patient, that is surely better for the steadfast."[iii] This behaviour is with regards to intentional evil. But, if it [the evil that reached you] was unintentional, then do not oppress him by intentionally taking revenge against him. [If you do so,] you would have intentionally recompensed him when he had [just] made a mistake. Be gentle with him and respond to him in the nicest manner that you can. And there is no strength except with Allah.[iv]

THE VIRTUE OF MANIFESTING THE SOUL'S PERFECTIONS

The religion of Islam and the elevated teachings of the *awliyā'* of religion highly encourage us to manifest good attributes in social relationships, no matter what the situation. In this way, we can train our souls by imposing these attributes on it, regardless of whether others exhibit these attributes as well. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

ثَلَاثٌ مِنْ مَكَارِمِ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْآخِرَةِ تَعْفُو عَمَّنْ ظَلَمَكَ وَ تَصِلُ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَ تَحْلُمُ إِذَا جُهِلَ عَلَيْكَ

Three things are among the noble traits of this world and the hereafter: that you forgive someone who has oppressed you, you establish a relationship with someone who has severed ties with you, and that you show forbearance with respect to someone who has behaved ignorantly with

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i. Qur'ān 42:41.

ii. Qur'ān 42:43.

iii. Qur'ān 16:126.

iv. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 271.

you.[i]

When man exhibits such noble traits before someone who has wronged or oppressed him, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it causes him to attain higher perfections with Allah. These perfections are so great that they cannot be properly conceived. For this reason, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) has given extremely lofty advice regarding one's behaviour with those individuals who have wronged us.

RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS SOMEONE WHO DOES EVIL INTENTIONALLY

1. Pardon and Forgiveness

In the first stage, Islam advises man with regards to someone who has done evil to him, that he should be forbearing, he should restrain his soul's inclination to rebel and retaliate, and that he should forgive that individual. This is regardless of whether the bad action done was with regards to the man's wealth, life, prestige, or honour. When man is intentionally oppressed, the psychological and internal motivation to take revenge is stronger. Allah says:

وَلَمَنِ انتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِم مِّن سَبِيلٍ إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَلَمَن صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

As for those who retaliate after being wronged, there is no ground for action against them. The ground for action is only against those who oppress the people and commit tyranny in the land in violation of justice. For such there will be a painful punishment. As for someone who endures patiently and forgives—that is indeed the

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 107, no. 3.

steadiest of courses. (42:41-43)

This set of verses as well as other Qur'ānic verses indicate that firstly, seeking justice against an oppressor to prevent oppression from developing and spreading is something desirable. Secondly, in situations of individual acts of oppression the first step to take is to pardon and forgive the wrongdoer. This is a desirable reaction which causes praiseworthy attributes to come about, such as the eradication of enmity, and is also followed by other good effects. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْعَفْوِ فَإِنَّ الْعَفْوَ لَا يَزِيدُ الْعَبْدَ إِلَّا عِزًّا

It is upon you to forgive because forgiveness does not increase [anything] for the servant except honour. (i)

تَجَاوَزُوا عَنْ عَثَرَاتِ الْخَاطِئِينَ يقيكم اللَّهُ بِذَلِكَ سُوءَ الْأَقْدَارِ

Pardon the stumbling of the wrongdoers so that through that Allah protects you from bad occurrences. (ii)

One of the important instances of being rewarded is to become the recipient of Allah's forgiveness, (iii) and all of us are in need of this. To attain Allah's forgiveness, various actions can be taken to prepare the grounds, one of which is forgiving others. However, this forgiveness is regarding individual and personal instances of oppression, just as Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) says:

جَازِ بِالْحَسَنَةِ وَ تَجَاوَزْ عَنِ السَّيِّئَةِ مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ ثَلْماً فِي الدِّينِ أَوْ وَهْناً فِي سُلْطَانِ الْإِسْلَامِ

Recompense acts of goodness and forgive evil as long as no rupture comes about in Islam and no frailty arises in the power of Islam. (iv)

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 108, no. 5.

ii. Ibn Abī Firās, *Majmū'ah warrām*, vol. 2, p. 120.

iii. Qur'ān 24:22.

iv. al-Āmudī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 4788.

2. Retribution to the Extent of the Evil

If someone chooses not to forgive the wrongdoer and decides to return the evil meted out to him with another act of evil, then he does not have any right to punish the wrongdoer beyond the same degree of evil that was done to him. This is something understood in the *sharī'ah*, the subject of *akhlāq*, and the *'urf* (what is commonly understood and accepted in society). Moreover, in situations that require financial compensation (*diyah*) and legal retribution (*qiṣāṣ*), specific amounts have been mentioned in the Holy *sharī'ah*. If the evil is related to slandering, defaming, backbiting, or using foul language, then the victim has no right to avenge himself in the same way, because by doing so, he would have himself committed a prohibited action. The only right he has is to not forgive someone who slanders him, but even this is something blameworthy from an *akhlāqī* perspective.

THE RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS SOMEONE WHO DID EVIL UNINTENTIONALLY

If someone unintentionally causes an evil outcome for another person, then he should not be punished as if he had intentionally oppressed that person. If the one who was hurt were to respond in such a manner, then he has himself committed an act of oppression. Even though some types of harms and injuries have *waḍ'ī*[i] laws specified in the *sharī'ah*—for example unintentionally taking someone's life—but this does not mean that man can retaliate with evil. If one were to do so despite the original act being unintentional,

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i. Rulings of the *sharī'ah* are of two types, *waḍ'ī* and *taklīfī*. The latter pertain directly to a person's action, and thus they fall under one of the five categories of being obligatory, recommended, forbidden, disliked or permissible. But the former are rulings that do not pertain directly to actions. Often, they set the grounds for *taklīfī* rulings. For example, *waḍ'ī* rulings that discuss how marriage comes about, will result in *taklīfī* rulings that each spouse must abide by. In this context, committing a crime or an injury results in a *waḍ'ī* ruling that specifies what the consequence is. (Ed.)

then this retaliation results in punishment in the hereafter as well as some specific laws that are mentioned in Islamic jurisprudence. In social relationships, especially in family relationships, if someone sees an instance of evil, they should not immediately consider it to be intentional. Doing so causes animosity towards the other person to develop in one's heart and creates a desire to seek revenge. In addition, one should deal with that person with softness and good conduct. If possible, they should even perform acts of righteousness towards him and make him happy, just as Allah says about those who possess intellect:

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

Those who are patient for the sake of their Lord's pleasure, maintain the prayer, and spend secretly and openly out of what We have provided them, and repel evil [conduct] with good. For such will be the reward of the [ultimate] abode. (13:22)

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THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE OF YOUR CREED

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ أَهْلِ مِلَّتِكَ عَامَّةً فَإِضْمَارُ السَّلَامَةِ وَ نَشْرُ جَنَاحِ الرَّحْمَةِ وَ الرِّفْقُ بِمُسِيئِهِمْ وَ تَأَلُّفُهُمْ وَ اسْتِصْلَاحُهُمْ وَ شُكْرُ مُحْسِنِهِمْ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ وَ إِلَيْكَ فَإِنَّ إِحْسَانَهُ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ إِحْسَانُهُ إِلَيْكَ إِذَا كَفَّ عَنْكَ أَذَاهُ وَ كَفَاكَ مَئُونَتَهُ وَ حَبَسَ عَنْكَ نَفْسَهُ فَعُمَّهُمْ جَمِيعاً بِدَعْوَتِكَ وَ انْصُرْهُمْ جَمِيعاً بِنُصْرَتِكَ وَ أَنْزِلْهُمْ جَمِيعاً مِنْكَ مَنَازِلَهُمْ كَبِيرَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ وَ صَغِيرَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَلَدِ وَ أَوْسَطَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْأَخِ فَمَنْ أَتَاكَ تَعَاهَدْتَهُ بِلُطْفٍ وَ رَحْمَةٍ وَ صِلْ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَجِبُ لِلْأَخِ عَلَى أَخِيهِ

And the right of all the people of your creed is to have good thoughts regarding them, to unfold the wing of mercy towards them, to be kind and tolerant with the wrongdoer from among them, to win over their hearts, to rectify them, and to be thankful to the one who performs good deeds among them, regardless of whether those good deeds are performed for themselves or for you. Verily, the good deed such a person performs for himself is in reality for you, so long as he holds back its

harm from you, spares you its burden, and confines himself [from harming you]. Thus, include them all in your supplications and assist them all with your assistance. Treat each of them according to their respective position compared to you. Consider the elderly among them as your fathers, the young ones among them as your children, and the middle-aged among them as your brothers. Thus, when any one of them enters upon you, attend to them with kindness and mercy. Establish relations with your brother in accordance with that which is incumbent upon a brother.[i]

THE VIEW OF ISLAM REGARDING ALL THE BELIEVERS

Islam is a Divine religion that looks upon all faithful people with a perspective of kindness, mercy, and seeking their righteousness. Its legal and *akhlāqī* commandments with regards to every affair of life are based on this perspective. These commandments have reached us from a Lord who is beneficent and merciful, who desires that man attain higher and higher levels of mercy. For this reason, He has sent down a luminous course of action so that man's existence, despite residing in this earthly realm—one replete with problems and opposing forces, wretched and base desires—can embark upon the journey towards the realm of lights and be connected with the *'illiyūn*.[ii] So that all believers constantly remain on the path of faith when dealing with one another, and so that they benefit from the outcomes of those interactions, Allah says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

The faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace

i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*, p. 271.

ii. The word *'illiyūn* is a term used in chapter 83 of the Noble Qur'ān, and apparently refers to those who dwell in the highest levels of Paradise. (Ed.)

between your brothers and be wary of Allah, so that you may receive [His] mercy. (49:10)

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said:

اَلْمُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْجَسَدِ الْوَاحِدِ إِنِ اشْتَكَى شَيْئاً مِنْهُ وَجَدَ أَلَمَ ذَلِكَ فِي سَائِرِ جَسَدِهِ وَ أَرْوَاحُهُمَا مِنْ رُوحٍ وَاحِدَةٍ

A believer is the brother of a believer just like one body. If one part of it suffers, the rest of the body feels that pain. Their soul [the two brothers] is from one soul.[i]

In this regard, Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī said, "I said to Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him), 'May I be sacrificed for you! Sometimes I become sad without any calamity afflicting me or any affair descending upon me, in such a way that my family and friends see this state of sadness apparent on my face.' The Imam said:

نَعَمْ يَا جَابِرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ خَلَقَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ طِينَةِ الْجِنَانِ وَ أَجْرَى فِيهِمْ مِنْ رِيحِ رُوحِهِ فَلِذَلِكَ الْمُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ لِأَبِيهِ وَ أُمِّهِ فَإِذَا أَصَابَ رُوحاً مِنْ تِلْكَ الْأَرْوَاحِ فِي بَلَدٍ مِنَ الْبُلْدَانِ حُزْنٌ حَزِنَتْ هَذِهِ لِأَنَّهَا مِنْهَا

Yes, O Jābir! Verily Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, has created the believers from the material of Paradise and has made a breeze from His own soul flow through them. For this reason, a believer is the full brother of a believer. When sadness afflicts one soul among these souls, in one city from among the cities, the other souls also get saddened because they are from one another.[ii]

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 166, no. 4.

ii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 166, no. 2.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BELIEVERS CONCERNING ONE ANOTHER

To mould and strengthen man's character, the Islamic view is that everyone should act according to their own responsibilities towards others, regardless of whether or not others act according to their *akhlāqī* or *shar'ī* responsibilities.

1. Kindness Towards All

This attribute is one of the prominent attributes of Allah. Since Allah is the source of goodness for all creation and specifically for us, He has asked that believers extend the wing of mercy towards one another. Internally they should desire that the other believers attain goodness and remain safe from their harm. Moreover, they should work towards this as well, helping others attain that which is good for them. This is because they consider other believers to be like themselves, they all believe in the merciful and generous Lord whose hidden treasure are endless. Always having such an outlook towards all believers in all places is something desirable. Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) advised Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah:

أَلْزِمْ نَفْسَكَ التَّوَدُّدَ ...وَ ابْذُلْ ... لِلْعَامَّةِ بِشْرَكَ وَ مَحَبَّتَك

Compel yourself to love ... and express ... with respect to all people, your joy and love.[i]

2. Tolerating Those Who Behave Badly

A believer has an open heart with respect to other believers and he desires that all of them be on the path of true goodness and felicity. Hence, when he encounters individuals who are weak in their faith, or are sinful and possess bad character traits, he looks at them in a kind manner because he knows that it is possible that he himself is like this as well. Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) was once asked, "There are those with us who believe in Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 71, p. 391, no. 6.

upon him) and elevate him over all people, but they do not describe your virtues as we describe them. Should we have a bond of *wilāyah* with them?" He replied:

نَعَمْ فِي الْجُمْلَةِ ... أَ لَيْسَ عِنْدَنَا مَا لَيْسَ عِنْدَكُمْ وَ عِنْدَكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ عِنْدَ غَيْرِكُمْ

> Yes, in general ... don't we possess that which you don't have? And do you not possess that which others don't have?[i]

For this reason, not only should a believer not sever his relationship with such people but moreover, as Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says, he should be close to them so that he can reform and positively influence them. Allah addresses the Noble Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), saying the following about the believers:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

> It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have surely scattered from around you. So, excuse them and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who trust in Him.[ii]

Such a relationship, with kindness and sympathy, has a gradual effect on those who have the capability of being affected, and one should not be heedless of this.

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i. Ibid., vol. 66, p. 169, no. 11.

ii. Qur'ān 3:159.

3. Thankfulness Towards Righteous Believers

One of the important ways to strengthen social relationships among believers is to pay attention to the good actions of others and to appreciate them. This is because, firstly, doing so reflects one's comprehension and understanding. Secondly, it gives rise to good *akhlāq*, and a good internal state. And thirdly, it positively influences others in an emotional and psychological way. It strengthens relationships regardless of whether they are normal human relationships or relationships based on faith. Ultimately, this thankfulness has a reciprocal effect of gratitude and causes an increase in Allah's blessings for the person.

4. Inviting and Supplicating for All

In the continuation of this section, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says to invite all of them to the truth, assist them in this regard, and seek the goodness of this world and the hereafter from Allah, for all of them. This is because doing so causes one to form a spiritual relationship with all believers. It directs us towards strengthening his faith and rectifying his internal states. Allah advises all the believers regarding each other in the following manner:

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

> There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, bidding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who are the felicitous. (3:104)

The highest and greatest good deed is the act of guiding. Every person, to whatever extent he has attained guidance, has a human and *akhlāqī* responsibility to invite others to that guidance. By doing so, his own guidance becomes stronger, guidance is spread, and other believers become stronger in this matter. It is necessary that believers are helped by any means that will strengthen their ability to attain

guidance, whether this is through words or practical initiatives. This is necessary so that the front and the force of believers is strengthened against the front of the disbelievers until they can eventually overpower them, especially in economic, cultural, and political affairs. In addition to this, it is necessary that a believer entreats and supplicates to Allah for the reformation of the believers' condition, both regarding their affairs in this world and those pertaining to their faith. One of the conditions for man's supplication to be accepted is that he supplicates for other believers. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) says:

إِذَا دَعَا أَحَدٌ فَلْيَعُمَّ فَإِنَّهُ أَوْجَبُ لِلدُّعَاءِ وَ مَنْ قَدَّمَ أَرْبَعِينَ رَجُلًا مِنْ إِخْوَانِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَدْعُوَ لِنَفْسِهِ اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ فِيهِمْ وَ فِي نَفْسِه

When someone supplicates, he should generalize and extend [his supplication by praying for others] because this is more necessary [for the supplication to be accepted]. And if someone gives preference to forty individuals from among his brothers over himself then [his supplication] is accepted for them as well as for himself.[i]

5. Appropriate Behaviour with Each and Every Believer

To preserve the status of every believer in the wider community of faith, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that those believers who are older in terms of their age ought to be considered as fathers. Hence, those rulings and *akhlāqī* responsibilities that have been decreed for a father ought to be observed with respect to them. Likewise, the younger ones should be seen as one's own children and one should not withhold advice, seeking goodness, guidance and help from them. With regards to those who are middle-aged, one ought to behave with them as though they are their own brothers.

Naturally, it is possible that man may not have a close relationship with every one of these groups. He may be limited to a more general

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i. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 90, p. 313.

relationship with some groups. However, in the case that he was to have a close relationship with some of the groups, then he must familiarize himself with the rulings that pertain to that group, as were mentioned in previous sections. In particular, when it comes to those of the same age—who are like brothers and with whose help a believer fulfils his needs—one ought to familiarize themself with the rulings of brotherhood and friendship, and act according to them.

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THE RIGHT OF THE AHL AL-DHIMMAH

وَ أَمَّا حَقُّ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ فَالْحُكْمُ فِيهِمْ أَنْ تَقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ مَا قَبِلَ اللَّهُ وَ تَفِيَ بِمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مِنْ ذِمَّتِهِ وَ عَهْدِهِ وَ تَكِلَهُمْ إِلَيْهِ فِيمَا طُلِبُوا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَ أُجْبِرُوا عَلَيْهِ وَ تَحْكُمَ فِيهِمْ بِمَا حَكَمَ اللَّهُ بِهِ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ فِيمَا جَرَى بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَهُمْ مِنْ مُعَامَلَةٍ وَ لْيَكُنْ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ ظُلْمِهِمْ مِنْ رِعَايَةِ ذِمَّةِ اللَّهِ وَ الْوَفَاءِ بِعَهْدِهِ وَ عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص حَائِلٌ فَإِنَّهُ بَلَغَنَا أَنَّهُ قَالَ مَنْ ظَلَمَ مُعَاهِداً كُنْتُ خَصْمَهُ فَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّه

And [as for] the right of the *ahl al-dhimmah* [those non-Muslims who are under the protection of Islam], their ruling is that you accept that which Allah accepts from them, you remain loyal to the covenant of protection and the treaty that Allah has ordained for them, and that you judge them according to this. [This applies] in what has been demanded from them and what they are compelled to do [according to the Islamic laws for the *ahl al-dhimmah*]. You must act with them in accordance with the rulings Allah has imposed on you, in any [matter

> or] transaction between them and you. Respecting this covenant of Allah's protection and being loyal to His treaty and the treaty of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) should be an obstacle between you and injustice towards them. For verily, it has reached us that the Prophet said, "Whoever oppresses someone under the protection of Islam, then I am his opponent." Therefore, be wary of Allah, and there is no power and no strength except with Allah. [i]

THE DEEP PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAM REGARDING RIGHTS

As opposed to other Divine religions, the religion of Islam possesses a unique breadth and depth in its religious teachings, be they pertaining to beliefs, *akhlāq*, or practice. With respect to what should be and what should not be done in man's social relationships, Islam has mentioned appropriate *akhlāqī* and legal commandments for every individual in society. In terms of their religion and beliefs, the *ahl al-dhimmah* are followers of heavenly books, but they are not Muslims and would not be expected to have Islamic viewpoints or behaviour. Nonetheless, the aforementioned nature of Islam's teachings allows them to live under the protection of Islam and Muslims. Moreover, they have a special social, economic, legal, and *akhlāqī* relationship with the Muslims, and Islam has given them the rights of any other citizen. One of the rights of Allah's servitude is that believers observe specific responsibilities with respect to the *ahl al-dhimmah*. This is because, on the one hand, religious teachings command us to have good relations with all Allah's servants, regardless of whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim. On the other hand, the Noble Prophet and the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) also displayed good behaviour with the polytheists and the Ahl al-Kitāb, so long as they did not exhibit enmity towards them. Some examples of the good relations that Islam commands one towards,

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, pp. 271-272.

are: speaking in a good manner with people,[i] doing good towards them just as Allah has done good towards you,[ii] the fact that if you do good to someone then you have done good to yourself,[iii] and the fact that those who perform good actions experience happiness in this world while the hereafter is even better for them.[iv]

At the same time, Islam has advised that this relationship should not lead to becoming attached to the non-Muslims. Believers ought to interact with them in a cautious manner so that their un-Islamic beliefs, *akhlāq*, and actions do not negatively influence the Muslims. Of course, interactions with the Ahl al-Kitāb will also depend on various conditions of time, place, Islam's position and authority in society, and their way of conduct. In this regard, one should ask those scholars who are proficient in religious rulings and the jurists who possess the necessary conditions, regarding their current legal responsibilities.

HOW TO BEHAVE WITH THE *AHL AL-DHIMMAH*[v]

Based on the aforementioned points regarding the *ahl al-dhimmah*, this relationship has various dimensions as per the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*.

1. Having a Just Relationship

The Noble Qur'ān says:

لَّا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم
مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

i. Qur'ān 2:83.

ii. Qur'ān 28:77.

iii. Qur'ān 17:7.

iv. Qur'ān 16:30.

v. The contents of this section are extracted from *Mafātīḥ al-hayāt* of Ayatollah Jawādī Āmūlī.

> Allah does not forbid you from dealing with kindness and justice with those [polytheists] who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes. Indeed, Allah loves the just. (60:8)

These luminous words advise us to coexist peacefully with non-Muslim so long as they are not waging war against us. Such a relationship takes form by observing the rights mentioned by the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) such as not slandering the Ahl al-Kitāb,[i] showing goodness towards one's Jewish companion,[ii] and visiting them when they are sick just as how the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went to visit a sick Jew.[iii] Other instances of these rights include not transgressing their limits and refraining from utilizing their possessions without their permission,[iv] and treating them well when they are your companion on a journey, just as how Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him) inspired

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i. al-Maghribī, *Daʿā'im al-Islām*, vol. 2, p. 460.

لَا يَنْبَغِي وَ لَا يَصْلُحُ لِلْمُسْلِمِ أَنْ يَقْذِفَ يَهُودِيّاً وَ لَا نَصْرَانِيّاً وَ لَا مَجُوسِيّاً بِمَا لَمْ يَطَّلِعْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهُ

It is not appropriate for a Muslim to accuse a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian, when he is not aware of the matter.

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqih*, vol. 4, p. 404.

... وَ إِنْ جَالَسَكَ يَهُودِيٌّ فَأَحْسِنْ مُجَالَسَتَهُ

And if a Jew is your companion, the be a good companion to him.

iii. Ibn al-Ashʿath, *Al-jaʿfariyyāt*, p. 159.

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ص عَادَ يَهُودِيّاً فِي مَرَضِهِ

Verily the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) visited a sick Jew

iv. al-Suyūṭī, *Al-jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr*, vol. 1, p. 468.

إِنَّ اللهَ تَعَالَى لَمْ يُحِلَّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوتَ أَهْلِ الكِتَابِ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنٍ

Verily Allah the Exalted has not allowed you to enter the houses of the *ahl al-kitāb* without their permission.

one of them to become Muslim by accompanying him.[i] Moreover, referring to their physicians is something permissible in Islam,[ii] as is writing letters to them whilst observing its etiquette such as saying *salām* to them and writing the name of the non-Muslim before writing one's own name.[iii]

While mentioning the rights of the *ahl al-dhimmah*, Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) says that you should accept from them that which Allah has accepted from them. Not only should you not do injustice to them, but also pay attention to the fact that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) is the enemy of the one who does injustice to them. Moreover, because they have made a covenant with the Muslims that

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 670. Refer to the end of right number 28 in this book, where the story has been narrated. (Ed.)

ii. Ibn Bistām, *Ṭibb al-a'immah*, p. 63.

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ الْبَاقِرِ ع عَنِ الرَّجُلِ يُدَاوِيهِ النَّصْرَانِيُّ وَ الْيَهُودِيُّ وَ يَتَّخِذُ لَهُ الْأَدْوِيَةَ فَقَالَ لَا بَأْسَ بِذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا الشِّفَاءُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) was asked about a man who is treated by a Christian or a Jew such that they prepare medicine for him. The Imam said, "There is no problem in that. Verily the cure is only in the hand of Allah the Exalted."

iii. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 651.

سُئِلَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع عَنِ الرَّجُلِ يَكُونُ لَهُ الْحَاجَةُ إِلَى الْمَجُوسِيِّ أَوْ إِلَى الْيَهُودِيِّ أَوْ إِلَى النَّصْرَانِيِّ أَوْ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَامِلًا أَوْ دِهْقَاناً مِنْ عُظَمَاءِ أَهْلِ أَرْضِهِ فَيَكْتُبُ إِلَيْهِ الرَّجُلُ فِي الْحَاجَةِ الْعَظِيمَةِ أَ يَبْدَأُ بِالْعِلْجِ وَ يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْهِ فِي كِتَابِهِ وَ إِنَّمَا يَصْنَعُ ذَلِكَ لِكَيْ تُقْضَى حَاجَتُهُ قَالَ أَمَّا أَنْ تَبْدَأَ بِهِ فَلَا وَ لَكِنْ تُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْهِ فِي كِتَابِكَ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص قَدْ كَانَ يَكْتُبُ إِلَى كِسْرَى وَ قَيْصَرَ.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) was asked about a believer who needs something from a Zoroastrian, a Jew, or a Christian. Perhaps they are his governor or a man of importance in society. Thus, the believer writes a letter to this non-Muslim about this important need. Should he mention the non-Muslim's name first and then say *salām* to him in his letter? Of course, he would only do this so that his need is fulfilled. The Imam said, "He should not mention their name first, but he should say *salām* to him in his letter. For verily, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would write to the Khosrow and Caesar."

their life and wealth will be safeguarded, so long as they observe the laws of the Islamic society, the Muslims have a responsibility to be faithful to their covenant and defend them against the oppression of others. For example, when Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him) heard that the Syrian army plundered the anklets, necklaces, and earrings of a women from the *ahl al-dhimmah*, he said:

فَلَوْ أَنَّ امْرَأً مُسْلِماً مَاتَ مِنْ بَعْدِ هَذَا أَسَفاً مَا كَانَ بِهِ مَلُوماً بَلْ كَانَ بِهِ عِنْدِي جَدِيرا

If any Muslim dies of grief after this, he is not to be blamed, but rather he is praiseworthy before me.[i]

2. The Prohibition of Being Attached to the Ahl al-Kitāb

In some verses of the glorious Qur'ān, Allah prohibits Muslims from developing close friendships with the Ahl al-Kitāb.[ii] This command is for various reasons. Firstly, to prevent the deviation of Muslims.[iii] Secondly, to remain safe from the hatred they harbour towards believers.[iv] Thirdly, to also remain safe from their inattentiveness towards the Divine book.[v] Fourthly, to remain far from their desire to attain superiority.[vi] Fifthly, to be saved from their deception.[vii]

3. Dealing Cautiously with the Ahl al-Kitāb

To protect the independence of Muslims in terms of religion, culture, society, economy, and politics, Islam has issued commandments

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i. al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon no. 27.

ii. Qur'ān 60:1 and 5:51.

iii. Qur'ān 2:120.

iv. Qur'ān 5:84.

v. Qur'ān 2:101.

vi. Qur'ān 5:18.

vii. Qur'ān 3:72.

to Muslims such as the prohibition of first saying *salām* when speaking with them, and that if they say *salām*, you should simply reply with, *'alaykum*.[i] Furthermore, Islam has also prohibited Muslims from imitating them in matters such as attire, outward appearance, and social etiquette.[ii] Lastly, Islam has commanded believers to refrain from participating in their ceremonies.[iii]

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i. al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 649.

لَا تَبْدَءُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ بِالتَّسْلِيمِ وَ إِذَا سَلَّمُوا عَلَيْكُمْ فَقُولُوا وَ عَلَيْكُم

Do not precede the *ahl al-kitāb* in saying *salām*, and if they say *salām* then say, "*wa 'alaykum.*"

ii. al-Ṣadūq, *Al-faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 130.

حُفُّوا الشَّوَارِبَ وَ أَعْفُوا اللِّحَى وَ لَا تَشَبَّهُوا بِالْيَهُودِ

Trim the moustaches and let the beards be free [grow], but do not resemble the Jews.

iii. al-Rāwandī, *Al-da'awāt*, p. 227.

وَ لَا تُشَيِّعُوا جَنَائِزَهُم

And do not attend their funerals

CONCLUSION

فَهَذِهِ خَمْسُونَ حَقّاً مُحِيطاً بِكَ لَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا فِي حَالٍ مِنَ الْأَحْوَالِ يَجِبُ عَلَيْكَ رِعَايَتُهَا وَ الْعَمَلُ فِي تَأْدِيَتِهَا وَ الِاسْتِعَانَةُ بِاللَّهِ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ- وَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعالَمِين

So, these are fifty-one rights that encompass you. Do not remove yourself from [abiding by] them under any circumstances. It is obligatory upon you to observe them and to act in a way that you fulfil these rights and to seek help from Allah, exalted is His praise in order to carry them out [appropriately]. And there is no strength except with Allah, and All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [i]

By paying attention to the station given to man in this world by Allah, and to the elevated purpose that He has assigned man, we come to realize that it is not very difficult to fulfil the rights mentioned in this treatise. This is especially true if one seeks help from Allah, relies upon Him and does *tawassul* to His *awliyā'* (peace be upon them). Without a doubt, Allah's favour will reach such a person. In fact, this reality—about the importance of seeking Allah's help—is advised by Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) in the beginning and at the end of this treatise.

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i. al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, p. 272.

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